

# **Career Plans and Military Propensity of Hispanic Youth:**

**Interviews With 1997  
Youth Attitude Tracking Study  
Respondents**



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**CAREER PLANS AND MILITARY PROPENSITY  
OF HISPANIC YOUTH:  
INTERVIEWS WITH 1997 YATS RESPONDENTS**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS)* was a complex annual telephone survey of 10,000 men and women aged 16-24. Since its beginning in 1975, YATS has produced nationally representative statistics regarding the opinions, attitudes, and beliefs of American youth on a variety of issues. Although the highly structured, formal YATS interview process allowed precise estimates of the percentage of youth indicating they will “definitely” or “probably” enter military service, it provided limited insight into the considerations or thought processes that caused youth to respond in a particular manner. It did not permit probing into the *meaning* of the responses.

This study of 542 Hispanic youth from a pool of 1997 YATS respondents was designed to gain insights into career decision-making and military propensity not provided by the standard YATS interviews. Equal numbers of Puerto Rican, Mexican, Cuban and Central/South American youth were interviewed. Respondents with a broad range of current and past interests in military service were interviewed. A 45-minute, semi-structured interview protocol was developed. Major topical areas included the career decision-making process, consideration of military enlistment, and knowledge of the military way of life. The interviews allowed respondents to present a “natural history” of their own decision-making process in their own words, reflecting their individual experiences. The interview protocol included the liberal use of probes to clarify or uncover the deeper meaning of responses and used questions that offered respondents opportunities to provide details about their career decision-making process.

The study explored the factors influencing young Hispanic men’s life plans, including age, geographic location, urbanicity, socioeconomic status, and educational aspirations. Of these, social class, as represented by the young men’s parents’ socioeconomic status, and educational aspirations were the factors most commonly associated with current life plans. These two factors emerged as powerful predictors of the process these young men used to make important decisions about their future as well

as the number and kind of opportunities that these young men believed were open to them. In addition, the study examined the knowledge that young men have about the specifics of military service and the relationship between this knowledge and military propensity.

Although the richness and variety of Hispanic men's lives and plans defy easy categorization, three reasonably distinct clusters of respondents were identified, each with a distinctive, detailed set of characteristics. Broadly speaking, clusters are defined by the "overlap" of two sets of factors: the socioeconomic status and educational level of the young man's parents and; the level and relative salience of the young man's educational goals and career plans. Although demographic factors influenced the specific ways the patterns were expressed within each of them, the clusters cut across age, urbanicity and region of the country. Depending on these two factors, youth appeared to function in very different decision-making contexts and display very different decision-making styles.

**College Oriented – Middle and Upper Income** This group was composed of youth coming from families who assumed that their sons will attend college. Many of the parents of these youth were college graduates themselves, and virtually all were reasonably successful at their own professions or businesses. They provide valuable role models and sources of career information. From an early age, these youth were brought up with the premise that attending college was the minimum requirement for future financial stability and professional success. By and large, youth in this group were not married, have no children, and did not have immediate financial or other concerns necessitating immediate career decisions. These youth tended to be rational decision-makers: those who generally feel ready or confident in their abilities to make good decisions; seek out information about possible careers, which they use as the basis for making decisions and taking action; and have plans that appear realistic.

**College Oriented – Working and Lower Class** The second group was comprised of young men who fell between the privileged college students and non college students.

They worked or attended technical schools, community colleges, or branch campuses of state universities and came from working and lower class families. None of the parents of the youth in this group completed education beyond the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, resulting in lower socioeconomic status, as well as a limited range of role models and sources of career information. Although a few of the youth in this group financed college through student aid and campus jobs, the majority worked full time to afford the cost of attendance while either partially or completely supporting their parent(s) and/or siblings. These youth were either rational or diffuse decision-makers. Diffuse decision-makers are those who generally: 1) did not feel ready to make good decisions about their future lives; 2) had done little or nothing to explore their interests or seek information about career options; and/or 3) tended to be unrealistic in terms of their abilities or the amount of education or other resources that were needed to “get ahead.”

**Non College Oriented** Young men whose life contexts were circumscribed by limited resources, family obligations, strong parochial attachments, and other factors restricting the content and scope of their career choices made up the third group. Economic crisis, unemployment, illness, and death often marked their lives.

### ***General Issues Affecting Propensity***

Each YATS respondent’s propensity was reviewed to study how career plans and propensity interacted in life patterns. Based on current and past interest in military service, subjects were categorized into three groups: Shifters, Fence-Sitters, or Non-Joiners.

#### **Shifters**

Shifters were young Hispanic men who once considered joining the military but had since changed their minds. Shifters tended to give the military credit as being fairer than the civilian world, but they viewed the civilian world as offering better opportunities and more challenges in their fields of interest. Shifters came from a more diverse range of social class backgrounds and were fairly evenly represented across age groups.



Shifters tended not to have strong familial support for following a military path and some had relatives who served that actively discouraged them from taking a military route.

Both college goers and non-college goers fell under the classification of Shifters. However, the characteristics of the two types were quite different. College-oriented youth at some point considered and then effectively dismissed the military as a way of helping to pay for college. They tended to view the military as too highly ordered and disciplined for their personal tastes. In contrast, the non-college goers had a pale, undifferentiated image of both the military and civilian life. They were often not very knowledgeable about either the military or civilian opportunities.

### **Fence-Sitters**

Fence-Sitters were young men who mentioned military service as a possible option, but were either uncertain about whether they would pursue it, or said they would pursue it only if other, more attractive options could not be realized. Two clusters emerged from the analyses of the fence-sitters' interview transcripts: youth who were attracted to the intangible benefits of military service and those who were attracted to the tangible benefits. Those who were attracted to the intangible benefits of the military represented the largest cluster and had favorable impressions of the military. They were most interested in the challenges the military would provide them to become mentally and physically stronger and the opportunities it would present to develop marketable skills. The majority of these youth grew up in working or lower class families. The remaining Fence-Sitters, those attracted to the tangible benefits, were drawn to the college tuition benefits associated with military service. These young men were rational decision-makers from lower middle and working class families. On average, Fence-Sitters were younger than youth in all other propensity groups. Fence-Sitters received fewer negative messages about enlistment than did Shifters. Fence-Sitters saw discipline, hard work and security as positive aspects of the Service. Some Fence-Sitters had alternative career options and others had a desire to change their present circumstances but were not currently ready or able to make the change.



## **Non-Joiners**

Young men in the Non-Joiners propensity group were those who were least likely to enlist in the Armed Forces. The majority of these youth had given very little thought to the possibility of serving and had consistently reported they would “probably not” or “definitely not” be serving on active duty in the next few years. Non-Joiners were a demographically diverse group that included young men from middle- and lower-income households whose families came to the continental United States from Mexico, Central and South America, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Cuba as many as five generations ago or as recently as three years ago. From the analysis of their in-depth interviews, three themes or patterns emerge that described major reasons for their disinterest in – or rejection of military service for themselves. The three major reasons for disinterest were perceptions that military service was inconsistent with other career goals, negative perceptions of the military or the military lifestyle, and religious beliefs or loyalty to countries of origin that precluded service in the Armed Forces.

## **Implications for Recruitment**

This study sample was matched for a number of factors. The researchers sought to determine the effect of country of origin and length of time in the U.S. in addition to the socio-economic factors. The sample included 40 young Hispanic men between the ages of 16-21. They represented members of Puerto Rican, Mexican, Central and South American households.

It was determined that socio-economic status was the strongest indication of the groups propensity to join the military. Differences associated with number of generations or years in the U.S. also appeared to be correlated with socioeconomic status.

The researchers determined that marketing strategies that appealed to youth on the basis of their overall approach to thinking about, and planning for, the future would be more effective than those based on their ethnicity.

Hispanic youth were a diverse group in terms of their overall approaches to the future and assessments of personal needs or preferences that drove their interest or disinterest in military service. Some youth approached career planning systematically or

rationally; others were diffuse decision-makers. Some were interested primarily in the intangible benefits of military service; others were primarily interested in the tangible benefits.

Rational decision-makers had reasonably clear ideas of their career interests and career identities. They made decisions based on information they had gathered from diverse sources, usually over a period of two or more years. Enlistment in the military entailed too many leaps of faith. In their view the Services did not provide sufficient information to make rational or purposive decisions. They hadn't had a lot of contact with friends or family members who had been in the Service, nor with recruiters. None was satisfied with the quality or depth of information received. They wanted up-front information about a variety of jobs, civilian applications of particular skills and the process of job selection or assignments, as well as information about day-to-day life. Major barriers to enlistment included perceptions of rough treatment in the military, especially during the first six months or so of service, and concerns about living apart from their families.

The Fence-Sitters were drawn to the college tuition benefits associated with military service. The majority of them grew up in lower middle and working class households and believed strongly that college was the key to success. Given their families' limited resources, they saw the military as one sure way of gaining access to the resources they needed to pursue an education. The majority of the youth attracted to the tangible benefits of the military were rational decision-makers, who were still in high school. A few had talked to recruiters, but they had much more information about colleges and civilian careers than they did about the military. Other barriers to enlistment included concerns about the trustworthiness of military recruiters and fears of hazing and other forms of rough treatment in the military.

Shifters were youth who thought about joining the military at one time but had since decided against it. The majority of these youth were in a diffuse stage of career decision-making when they were considering enlistment. Whereas information was key to rational decision-makers, relationships and messages about "finding oneself" or "finding one's calling" appealed to diffuse decision-makers. These men either were passively receptive to or actively looking for help in establishing direction in their lives.

None said that he decided against the military to pursue alternative plans. Rather the concerns over the treatment of soldiers and unsatisfactory or unsatisfying job assignments were the reasons they gave for not enlisting.

Non-Joiners were those who were least likely to enlist in the Armed Forces. They generally believed the military was geared more toward people who, unlike them, lacked goals and needed direction.

Great care should be taken in using marketing strategies that target young men on the basis of their ethnicity or countries of origin. Such strategies may be considered offensive and be counterproductive. Skills training was a powerful incentive for some youth, but the Services were missing recruiting opportunities. More could be done to make connections between youth's career interests or aspirations and job assignments in the military. Military recruitment messages were not viewed as credible. Youth point to marketing strategies that focus exclusively on the benefits of service as one basis for diminished credibility. For many youth, negative images of the military or military life outweigh positive ones. These negative images were major barriers to enlistment.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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The Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS) began in 1975 as a relatively modest telephone survey of young men aged 16-21. Since then, it has grown into a complex annual telephone survey of 10,000 young men and women 16-24 years of age. Propensity to join the military—i.e., a youth's assessment of the likelihood that he or she would volunteer for one of the Services—is a key concept in the larger YATS effort. Over the years, it has provided a reliable measure of trends in youth attitudes toward the military and the characteristics of those who are likely to join and those who are unlikely to join. However, the large sample size and highly structured instrument that are used to achieve these precise estimates of propensity preclude exploration of complex factors that may underlie or explain any observed differences.

In 1995, in-depth studies of YATS respondents were initiated to increase understanding of youth propensity for military service. To date, these studies have focused on two broad areas of inquiry—the context and processes associated with career decision-making among different segments of the youth population; and circumstances affecting propensity for military service. The first two studies in the series focused on young men and young women, respectively. This report presents findings from the third study in the series that focuses on young men of Spanish descent.

## Rationale for the Study and Research Questions

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The Hispanic population in the United States, which now represents approximately one out of every eight youth, is increasing more rapidly than any other segment of the youth population. For the past several years, the propensity of young Hispanic men for military service has been higher than any other race/ethnic group. Their patriotism and commitment to duty are values most sought by the Department of

Defense (DOD). Recently, however, YATS shows declining rates in propensity for military service. The DOD recruiting efforts are concerned with this—not only because they need recruits who are smart, able and dedicated, but also because they place high value on participation in military service by all segments of the American people.

Five broad research questions were developed to guide this study and further understanding of military propensity among young Hispanic men. These questions are:

- How do young Hispanic males approach or plan for their futures?
- What personal and socioeconomic characteristics or experiences are associated with various approaches to career decision-making among young Hispanic males?
- To what extent do young Hispanic men consider military service when they are thinking about their futures?
- What personal and socioeconomic characteristics or experiences are associated with propensity for military service?
- What images or opinions do young Hispanic men have of the military?

## Methods

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A total of 40 16-21-year-old participants in the 1997 YATS survey were interviewed for this study. Sampling procedures were used to select approximately equal numbers of youth along the dimensions of country of origin and propensity for military service. The intent was to select a sufficient number of youth along each of these dimensions to assess similarities and differences within and across them.

A semi-structured interview guide was developed for the study. The guide covered the major issues or topics of interest. Interviewers



were trained to ask open-ended questions in the areas of interest, and let the youth talk. In this way, we were able to gather information that reflects those aspects of issues or topics that the young men think are important. As needed, follow-up questions were used to encourage youth to expand or clarify their responses.

It is important to note that the analysis concerns a small number of youth and the findings are not presented as generalized estimates of the characteristics, attitudes or behaviors of the population. Rather, they are presented to lend much needed insight into the issues and perspectives of young Hispanic men. Each in-depth interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. These transcripts constituted the raw data that was analyzed for this report. The analytic approach (see Appendix A) conformed to commonly accepted standards for treating qualitative data. It included reading and processing approximately 900 pages of transcribed interviews with youth, and generating and testing hypotheses about relationships and patterns in the data across cases.

## **Organization of the Report**

The report presents a detailed look at factors associated with interests in civilian and/or military careers among young Hispanic men. Chapter 2 discusses the social and economic contexts in which sampled youth make decisions about the future, as well as their generalized approaches to career decision-making within these contexts. Chapter 3 presents findings on propensity for military service. Particular attention is given to the youth's images of the military and how likely they are to enlist in the next couple of years. Chapter 4 discusses the implication of key findings for recruitment.

## 2. CAREER DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

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This chapter discusses key elements in the career decision-making process among a diverse group of young men of Spanish descent. The chapter is organized into three major sections. The first section describes the social and economic contexts in which the young men in our sample make decisions about their futures. The second section looks more closely at their generalized approaches to decision-making within these contexts. The third and final section presents a summary of major findings.

### **Contextual Factors**

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Young people do not make decisions about careers in a vacuum. Rather, they make them in the context of social relations and objective life circumstances that affect their approach and options—real or perceived—in profound ways.

Most models of youth development and career identity formation assume a period of psychosocial moratorium for youth in their late teens and early twenties when they can rationally explore and tryout various adult roles before they commit to a specific career, start a family, or assume other responsibilities usually associated with adulthood. Further, this rational approach or model of career decision-making assumes access to adults who support the youth and provide information and opportunities. For some of the young men in our sample, these fundamental conditions for rational career development are present in their lives; for others, however, they are seriously constrained or absent.

The first stage of our analysis considered a wide range of contextual factors that might differentiate young men who fit the rational decision-making model from those who do not. The most influential factors proved to be those that define or usually are associated with social class—e.g., parent education and quality of neighborhood schools. Other differences emerged between youth who were oriented

toward college (i.e., either college-bound or already enrolled) and those who were not; socialization experiences in the home, including parenting style; and age at time of immigration.

### **College-Oriented Youth**

Among youth that are in college or college-bound, major contextual differences that affect decision-making are linked to the social and economic status of their parents. Age at immigration also emerged as an important contextual variable. More specifically, the decision-making contexts for college-oriented youth that came to the United States in their late teens were noticeably different from those who were born here or came here when they were younger.

### **Middle and Upper Class Youth**

About one-quarter of the young men in our sample grew up in solid middle or upper class households with two parents. The majority are second or third generation Americans whose parents or grandparents came to the United States from Mexico, the Americas and Puerto Rico to attend college, to avail themselves of professional opportunities, or to escape untenable political situations. Their parents work in a variety of professional occupations, such as medicine, aeronautical engineering, and business. About half are of mixed heritage—i.e., one parent is of Spanish heritage (mostly Central or South American) and the other is of European descent. One-third are not fluent in Spanish. Among those who are fluent, most speak Spanish at home with their parents or grandparents, but not with their siblings. Their interactions with friends and others outside of the home are almost always in English.

Among all respondents in our sample, the life circumstances of these relatively well-to-do young men most closely resemble those

presumed by the rational decision-making model. All were single and, for all intents and purposes, free to explore and pursue career options without indemnity. As one ambitious high school senior put it: "I'm pretty confident as to my future plans... I'm not too worried... I know that I'm young enough that if I do make mistakes I can correct them."

**Higher education the norm.** Without exception, young men from middle- and upper-class households expect to attend and graduate from a four-year college. Several also expect to complete post-graduate studies in diverse fields, including international law and business, aeronautical engineering, computer programming, and sports medicine.

For the majority, at least one of their parents had four or more years of post-secondary education. Further, their parents could afford to live in neighborhoods with strong academic high schools and some paid for them to attend elite private schools. These young men, like most of their friends and neighbors, grew up believing that college follows high school like night follows day. As a result, they neither worried nor thought about whether they would attend college. As one youth put it:

That's the way it has to be. That's how my parents did it. That's how my older cousins did it. I guess that's the way we've been brought up. You need to go to college if you're going to be successful. I mean I can't do what I want to do without going to college.

Another young man said that as he was growing up his parents always had a lot of "stories to tell about when they were in school or [about when] they were away from home." From an early age, he told the interviewer, "I was definite that higher education was for me... I was going to have that opportunity and my parents were going to pay for it." He also said he knew that he was nearing the time in his life when he was expected to "make his own stories."

Most of the other young men from solid middle and upper class families also said their parents

would pay, or were willing to pay, their college expenses with no discernible strings attached. In addition, several mentioned that they had been awarded or thought they might be awarded academic scholarships. Only one said he wanted to finance his education through loans that he could repay once he graduated and was settled in his career. Although his parents are more than willing to foot the bill, he was eager to "prove" to them that he is responsible and mature. In his words:

My parents say they will pay... but I don't want them to... I want to pay on my own. I want loans I can pay on my own. I want them to know that I depend on myself.

If necessary, he said, he would join the Air Force after college if he couldn't find a job that would enable him to pay-off his educational loans.

Without financial worries, and socialized to believe that college was inevitable, these young men were able to concentrate on their studies and participate in extra-curricular activities that would "round them out." It also meant that their choices of colleges or universities would not have to be limited to those near their parents' homes. Compared to college-oriented youth from working and lower class households, they are much more likely to leave home to attend a college that they selected based on its reputation and course offerings. Ray, for example, is an out-of-state student at an art institute that has one of the best audio engineering programs in the country. He did take a year off after high school to "just fool around" while he got comfortable with the idea of leaving home to study. Another young man, still in high school, plans to apply to Stanford on the West Coast and Harvard on the East Coast. He will enroll in "the best one that [he] can get into."

**Parent involvement.** In general, these youth depicted their parents' roles in the formation of their career goals as mostly non-prescriptive and supportive. Rather than suggest specific careers or career paths, they encouraged their sons to explore their interests and reflect on their personal preferences, strengths and values.

They served as role models and sounding boards, and helped their sons gain access to information and other resources that could help them make good decisions.

One young man's description of his parents' non-prescriptive style is illustrative:

Whenever I used to ask them what they wanted me to be they'd say, 'whatever you want to be.' I was frustrated by this [at first] because I wanted to be a whole bunch of things and I wanted them to decide for me. They said this is something you have to decide... [They told me] I have to look and search.

Although his parents never did "tell him what they wanted him to be," he said they had a profound influence on his decision to pursue a career in politics and/or international law:

[When I was thinking about what I wanted to be] I spent time talking with my parents and I just noticed what they talked about and just...in the way that they raised me, just being very multicultural and very appreciative of everything. They kind of set me up for exactly what that was. They set me up to be involved with people and they've kind of raised me to be the kind of person that I am—being interested in other cultures and interested in being with people and understanding people.

Another young man, Joseph, who is 16 and only beginning to think about his life's work, said he is influenced by his father who likes to talk about his work in engineering and his father's friend, an architect, who "brings drawings over" that look interesting. He also has talked to his parents about becoming a marine biologist because he thinks he is most interested in pursuing a career that involves working outdoors. His parents listen and encourage him to collect as much information as he can before he makes up his mind. His mother has arranged for him to sit in on some college classes while he is still in high school so that he can "just see what it's like."

Several young men mentioned that their parents were not entirely comfortable with some of the options they were exploring or the careers they wanted to pursue. One young man who was fascinated by Apache helicopters was considering two options. One was to join the Armed Forces so that he could fly them; the other was to study aerodynamic engineering so that he could build them. Although his parents clearly preferred the civilian route, they did not deter him from exploring both paths during high school. His father, he said, played an active role during this exploratory phase in the career decision-making process. He accompanied him to some meetings with recruiters and taught him how to ask the right questions in an interview. In his words:

If there was anything that wasn't clear he could help... [With my father present] I got more information. He asked questions that I wouldn't have asked. I wasn't misled like I could have been.

Also, he told the interviewer that his father's presence ensured that he would not be persuaded to sign any papers before he was ready. Ultimately, he chose the civilian path—not because this was his parents' wish, but because it was his own.

Another young man said his parents were "iffy" about his decision to study radio production—a passion he has held since he saw Star Wars for the first time—mostly "because they did not understand that people do get paid for that." Nevertheless, he said they were willing to support him, morally and financially, in whatever he wanted to do.

These parents, it seems, recognize that their son's chances of success and happiness are greatest when they are motivated to pursue careers that are intrinsically motivating. In the next section, we will show how very different their approach is from the more prescriptive one that parents of college-oriented youth from working and lower class households take.

## ***Working and Lower Class Youth***

Not all of the college-oriented youth in our sample grew up in solid middle or upper class households with two parents. Roughly one-quarter were from working and lower class one- and two-parent families. Slightly more than one-half of these young men are second generation Americans whose parents came mainly from Central America, Mexico and Puerto Rico in search of a better life for themselves and their children. They had 12 years of schooling or less and supported their families with income earned from work in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs, mostly in the service and retail sectors. Nearly all of these young men communicate with their parents in Spanish; outside the home, however, most prefer to speak English.

By supplementing student financial aid with money earned from campus jobs a few of the young men from working and lower class households are experiencing a moratorium from adult responsibilities. One young man's parents sacrificed and saved so that their son could concentrate on his schoolwork. His parents, neither of which had more than eight years of formal schooling, wanted him to have a better life than the one they have known and discouraged him from doing anything that would distract him from his studies. When he wanted to get a part-time job to earn a little spending money, his parents told him "don't worry about a job right now, just worry about graduating from high school."

For the majority of college-oriented youth from working and lower class households, however, opportunities to experience a moratorium are constrained. Beginning in high school, many work during the school year to offset the costs of their education—e.g., transportation, books and other necessities. Moreover, some are contributing to expenses in their families' households. One young man, for example, told the interviewer he had grants that paid his tuition, but did not have money to buy books. His mother, a single parent with four children, could not help him. "I see her working and working and it's sometimes not enough," he

said. He got a part-time job selling shoes. With his earnings he buys his own books and other necessities. Whatever is left, he contributes to the household. Like many of the other college-oriented youth in our sample from working and lower class households, he had very little downtime to reflect on his interests or develop them beyond what he was exposed to in the classroom setting. As one young man succinctly explained: "I have no life. I just go to school and go to work and that's it."

In most cases, the jobs these young men have are unrelated to the careers they aspire to enter and do not provide opportunities to get on-the-job experience or to gain access to networks that would help them realize their goals. Louis's story is typical. He is a 19-year-old college sophomore who is motivated to do whatever he can to escape the poverty his parents experienced when they started out in this country. At the time of the in-depth interview, he was working full-time as a gas station attendant and taking classes in computer electronics at a local community college. He hopes to transfer to a four-year college and pursue a career in electrical engineering. He told the interviewer he is working hard now so that one day he might have the credentials and skills that would lead to "a good paying job that's permanent" and would enable him to raise his parents' standard of living.

***Higher education: Blazing new trails.*** Without exception, youth from working and lower class homes are among the first generation in their families to continue their education after high school. For them, college attendance was never assumed or taken for granted. Rather, it was a dream they and/or their parents held; an elusive goal to strive for.

Unlike their relatively well off age-mates, these young men mostly attended public schools in inner-cities or other low-income or transitional neighborhoods, where the rates for dropping out are high and prospects for attending college are low. Several mentioned the visibility of drugs in their respective neighborhoods. Andrew, for one, said he "saw the effects that [drugs] have on people" and decided he would "just do his

own thing.” To thrive in this environment he said he had to “pretty much isolate” himself from his peer group.

Compared to those from solid middle and upper class households, the number and quality of colleges these young men choose from often are limited to those that are available locally. In many cases, the fact that they are attending college at all is daring enough. Another reason is to curtail costs. As one ambitious young man explained:

I applied to different universities and the reason I decided to attend [the one closest to home] is because it is not quite as expensive... I have two very young sisters and a younger brother so I got grants and everything, but they didn't come to \$24,000. So I went to a modest school.

Yet another reason is that they want to remain close to their families, especially younger siblings. Several mentioned that they wanted to be role models or “figures” for their younger brothers and sisters—to teach them about a life that their parents had never experienced. Ramiro, for example, had thought about living in a dormitory, but decided to stay home and be a “figure” for his younger sister. Julio gave similar reasons for choosing to stay home and attend a local college:

I'm the oldest one so it's my responsibility to do my best. I want to reward my parents by succeeding and helping them and my brothers and sister anyway that I could... There's a lot of pressure on the eldest... I would like them to follow in my footsteps... But most of all...I would like... to show them options. Open their minds.

A few of these youth entered (or planned to enter) four-year colleges after high school. Most, however, attend or plan to attend community colleges for their first two years with hopes that they will be able to transfer to four-year colleges. Some were forced to do this for financial reasons; others did not have the grades to get into a four-year program right out of high school.

Compared to those from solid middle and upper class homes, many of the young men in this cluster appears to be less connected to college and college life. In part, this can be attributed to the fact that community colleges do not offer students the level or diversity of experiences that four-year colleges do. For example, one young man who was attending a community college after a rough first year at a state university, bemoaned the limited opportunities he had to interact with teachers and students:

I only go to school maybe once a week because I'm taking these media courses and you watch those at home and then go to school and take the test. I don't even go to class there... So I don't meet anyone.

Others, however, said they probably would not have much opportunity to participate in campus life and activities if they did exist because so much of their time outside the classroom was spent commuting and working. At least one young man in our sample found this situation too stressful and dropped out during his first semester. In his words:

My school was in Queens and I live in the Bronx and I had to drive and stuff like that, paying the tolls and all that. It was expensive. Getting it from my parents, you know, my parents have their bills... so the money wasn't working... Books aren't cheap in college... All I was doing was working and going to school... My parents were upset about it, but I just dropped out.

At the time of the in-depth interview he was working in the mailroom at a major record company in the city and recording music on the side, an avocation he has pursued since he was ten. He would like to return to school in the future since there are things related to the music industry, “such as law, legal stuff when it comes to contracts,” that require formal training. Another youth, aged 22, was also plagued by financial problems and, as a result, had been in and out of college four or more times:

I always wanted to go to college. I just couldn't afford it and my parents couldn't

help me. So every time I began, every time I started, I had to stop because of money. Money, that was it.

He recently got his license to style hair. He hopes this will provide a steady flow of income that will enable him to complete his degree program and “make a better life.”

**Parent involvement.** Although their parents had little formal schooling, college-oriented youth from working and lower class families were imbued with the American dream. Throughout their lives, their parents stressed the importance of education and encouraged them to work hard in school. For these parents, education was the key to better lives for their children than the ones they had known. However, they could do little to facilitate their sons’ access to networks or resources that would ease their transition to college and the “good life.” As one young man told us: “[Throughout high school] my mother said study and I did my best... [But] I had no idea what college actually was.” Like so many of the other parents of these young men, his mother had little or no firsthand knowledge about college and careers that she could pass along to her son.

Some parents provided their sons with little or no advice about careers or college. As one young man put it: “My parents couldn’t help me. I had to come up with my own career goals... They think [my goals] are a really good idea. They’re pushing me forward.”

Many other working and lower class parents, however, played, or attempted to play, decisive roles in selection of the colleges their sons would attend or the careers they would pursue. Unlike their middle and upper class counterparts, their parenting style tended to be more prescriptive than developmental. For them, choosing a field that provided job security is more important than choosing one that is intrinsically satisfying. Accounting, banking, computer programming and medical technology were “good jobs” because there would “always be banks and sick people.” They were also the sort of professionals their parents were likely to

encounter and, therefore, have some notion about what their work lives were like.

A couple of the young men in our sample appeared willing to go along with their parents’ choices. One, whose parents had selected the college he would attend and the courses he would take, thought his parents had “his best interests at heart” and more knowledge about life than he had. Another was clearly torn between following his father’s admonition to study business administration and his desire to study communications. In his words:

My father really wants me to do business administration. He thinks you can get a good job with that. But communications is what I really enjoy. I like doing all kinds of things... I like writing. I like editing. Video production. I like that stuff... Maybe I can do [communications] on the side, but I guess maybe I should start off with [business] and then see where I go from there.

After initial efforts to comply, several of the older young men in our sample actively resisted their parents’ decisions. Recindo, who was a junior in college at the time of the in-depth interview, described the rocky road he followed to please his mother before he decided to do what he has always wanted to do:

Pretty much by the time I was 13 or 14 I’ve wanted to be a part of the entertainment industry. But my mother was very against it. [She told me I] have to find myself a job that will make me money. That’s the most important thing [to her]. When I told her that I wanted to be involved in film, she was like that’s a very unpredictable business. How are you going to support yourself with that? Then I got kind of discouraged about it... But then once I got into college and I went through like three departments... I went through the science department, I went through the urban studies department and the English department... and I really wasn’t happy with any one of these, I just finally decided to go with what makes me happy and go with film.



His mother was not at all comfortable with this decision. After initial efforts failed to convince her that he could make a decent living at something he enjoyed, however, he asserted his independence. In his words:

I told my mom I can teach. I can write. I can be an editor for a magazine. I can be a critic. There are many possibilities... [but she didn't agree]. Then I just told her I'm paying for my own education. Eventually, I'm the one who is going to find the job to pay for the loans. They are my loans. They are under my name and so they are my responsibility. I [just realized] I'm very independent.

Only time will tell whether some of the other young men eventually resist their parents' efforts to limit their career options to those they consider "least risky" or "most secure."

### ***Recent Arrivals***

Three college-oriented youth in our sample have lived in the United States for less than three years. Two were from families with meager resources. Their parents had less than eight years of formal schooling and had immigrated to the United States because they could earn more here as unskilled laborers than they could earn in their countries of origin. The third left his country with his mother and sister with only a few days notice because they were threatened by terrorists.

Within these contexts, these young men were in the throes of at least two major life events—adjusting to a new culture and making the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Language was a major challenge for them. Prior to their arrival in the United States, they had little or no exposure to English. One picked up on it relatively quickly—mostly because none of the teachers and only a couple of the students understood Spanish at the small town high school he attended. Another, who came to the U.S. at about the same time, however, was really struggling with the language. Since his arrival, he has been taking ESL classes, but has few

opportunities in his day-to-day life to practice what he is learning in the classroom. At home, no one speaks English. At work, his co-workers on the loading dock also only speak Spanish—an advantage when he was looking for work, but a disadvantage when it comes to learning English.

All three of these young men have completed high school and are working full-time. One who worked alongside his father in the fields picking cotton and watermelon when he first arrived, got a job as a computer technician; the second loads trucks on a dock; and the third paints jets. Also, all three have deferred their college plans because they either are not eligible for financial aid due to their immigration status or are not sufficiently proficient in English.

### **Non-College-Bound Youth**

The majority of young men in our sample who were not oriented toward college grew up in working and lower class households, with one or both of their parents. Nearly two-thirds were born outside the United States or in Puerto Rico. A few came here to live in their early teens, but most were 10 or younger. Compared to their college-bound peers, very few knew why their families immigrated. Those who did, gave explanations that were either vague (e.g., to work) or highly idiosyncratic (e.g., to escape crime or to follow God's wish). Also, relatively few knew how much education their parents had completed, particularly their fathers. Like their college-oriented age-mates from working and lower class households, those who did know reported 12 years or less. However, there is little or no evidence to suggest that the parents of these non-college-bound youth stressed the importance of education to them when they were growing up.

The nature of the moratorium that these young men might experience is markedly different from their college-oriented age-mates of all classes. A few have plans to enter a short-term trade school after high school. The majority who were already out of school, however, appear disconnected from any institutions or

programs that might provide some guidance or structure for their transitions to careers or work. For the most part, it appears these young men are left to find their way to adulthood and fulfillment in the low-wage labor force. At the time of the in-depth interviews, most of these young men were not getting ahead, but they were getting by. Several had attempted to join the Armed Forces; two were rejected, however, and the other was still in high school. A few others are very immature in their outlook or are drifting—with no discernible compass or anchor in their lives.

These non-college-bound young men are all single and living at home with their parents. For the most part, then, they are not in positions where they are expected to shoulder adult responsibilities. However, there are a few whose youthful moratorium is constrained by obligations to their families or religious communities. Other factors that limit career options, include limited abilities and geographic isolation. These contextual influences on their decision-making are discussed below.

### ***Family Obligations***

Two young men in the non-college-bound group deferred or suppressed their aspirations for education and careers due to obligations to their families. One did so out of necessity after his father fell seriously ill; the other so that he could serve God and start his own family.

Of all the young men in our sample, Eric had the most truncated youth. Once a good student with college plans, he was forced to leave high school during his junior year to support his family when his father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and was no longer able to work. As the eldest son, 16-year old Eric became the family's primary breadwinner. "It came to a point," he told the interviewer, "we were about to lose our house...lose everything... I [was] the only man besides my father... so I took it on myself." Because he was young and inexperienced, he could not earn the kind of money his father had earned driving an 18-wheel truck. This meant that he had to work very long hours to earn

enough to keep the bill collectors at bay. "There was no life for me," he said. "I needed to make the money so we could keep what our father had worked so hard for... I had to mature a little bit faster than my friends."

At the time of the in-depth interview, Eric was working two minimum wage jobs that he "hated" and studying for his GED. Although it took nearly two years to get approved, his father now receives a "disability check." This has taken some of the financial pressure off him. He would like to resume pursuit of his goals to attend college and pursue a career in banking, but is finding it hard to recapture the enthusiasm he once had for learning.

Another young man places God, religion and family above anything else in his life. His parents raised him as a Jehovah's Witness and when he came of age to make his own decisions, he chose to continue as an active practitioner. For nearly two years after high school he served as a full-time field worker for his church, "going door-to-door to talk to others about the good news of God's kingdom." At the time of the in-depth interview he had been living outside the religious community for four months, working full-time as a draftsman and saving as much money as he could for his forthcoming wedding. He said he would have liked to attend a four-year college because he "likes to learn and know what [he's] talking about...and would like to make good money." However, he has chosen instead to marry and start a family. He has some drafting skills and any further career considerations are out of the question. As he explained:

I'm on my own and I don't have rich parents. I'm not that fortunate and my fiancée, she doesn't have rich parents either... We're kind of living one day at a time... I just don't have the time with all my responsibilities. Right now, I just can't say 'well, I'm going to stop working full time and rough it a little bit for a while and go back to school.' I have to save up for a wedding and then once I do save up and get married, then I have to, you know, take somebody under my wing so to speak... She

is then my responsibility. That's what I have to do.

Like this young man, several other non-college-bound youth in our sample were more oriented to marriage and family than careers. However, they were having a more difficult time finding work that could support those goals due to their limited abilities and geographic isolation.

### ***Limited Abilities and Geographic Isolation***

The rational decision-making model assumes that young people make decisions about careers and other aspects of their future lives based on consideration of a broad array of options. In addition to those who are responsible for supporting others—whether their parents, themselves or their wives-to-be—it is clear that many of the non-college-bound young men in our sample do not have an array of options to choose from. Some who were interested in joining one of the Armed Forces after high school, for example, were denied entry because they did not score sufficiently high on the ASVAB and/or were told they had physical conditions that rendered them ineligible. These young men said they had learning problems, which were accompanied in a couple cases by attention deficit disorders. When the military option was eliminated, they had difficulty finding work in the small towns where they lived. At the time of the in-depth interviews, none of them had steady work. Beto, for example, was doing odd jobs for people in his neighborhood. Sometimes he is paid for this work. At other times, he just does it because he wants to do something productive. He would like to get a full-time paid position in maintenance, though he would be willing to take any job he could get. Thomas worries that “there is not much of a future for a young person” in the small town where he lives with his parents. Since he graduated from high school he has worked in a restaurant where the hours are unpredictable and the pay low. A major concern for him is finding a job that offers health and other benefits.

## **Approaches To Decision-Making**

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The previous section examined the social and economic contexts in which youth make decisions about their futures as workers, sons, husbands and fathers. This section focuses on their individual styles and approaches to decision-making within these contexts.

Decision-making style refers to the overall manner or approach that individuals take to thinking about or planning their futures. Among the young men in our sample, three main styles or approaches to decision-making and the future emerged—purposive or rational, diffuse, and disconnected. Our analysis, presented below, focuses on three distinct, but interrelated, aspects of decision-making that highlight differences in style or approach. These are:

- Subjective assessments of readiness to pursue career and other goals,
- Action taken that is associated with incremental steps to explore options or achieve goals, and
- Determination of whether the young man's goals and objectives are realistic.

### **Rational Decision-Makers**

Overall, rational or purposive decision-makers are those who generally feel ready or confident in their abilities to make good decisions; seek out information about possible careers, which they use as the basis for making decisions and taking action; and have plans that appear realistic. More than a third of our sample met these criteria, including most of the middle and upper class youth, and a few college-oriented and non-college-oriented working and lower class youth. As will be shown, age was not a reliable predictor. Some juniors and seniors in high school, for example, were more mature and forward thinking than some high school graduates and college students.

## Readiness

“Readiness” is the youth’s perspective on how well prepared or confident he was feeling at the time of the interview to make decisions, often incremental, that would lead to eventual achievement of career goals. Of the three dimensions of decision-making style, however, it is the most subjective and, taken alone, the least reliable predictor.

In general, rational decision-makers expressed confidence in their readiness to make good decisions about their futures. At least in part, this can be explained by the fact that many planned to pursue careers that are related to interests they have sustained since childhood. For example, one young man explains his longstanding desire to pursue a career in aeronautical engineering this way:

I guess it started when I was playing Lego. I had helicopters with missiles and everything else... Then I saw some things on Discover and I love watching things like airplanes and then go through the design and everything. I was just blown away and amazed by all of this stuff. I’ve always had an interest in that ever since I was a kid. So, I figured if I was interested in it that long, go for it. That’s probably what is inside of me.

Another young man, George, said business was an easy decision for him. Since elementary school he has had a penchant for trading and selling things—from baseball cards and comic books at trade shows to popular snack foods not sold in the school cafeteria. Similarly, two other young men felt they were ready to make good decisions about their futures, since they have had predilections for audio engineering since they were young. At the time of the in-depth interviews, one was majoring in radio production in college. He described himself as “set” in his career and was anxious to finish school, get a job, and work his way up the ladder. The other, from a poorer family, was working in the mailroom at a major record company in New York, picking up skills by hanging out with the “techies” after work, and saving to buy his own equipment. Although

their paths are very different, both are level-headed and single-minded in their goals.

Although still in high school, several younger rational decision-makers felt ready to make decisions about their future careers. Marcus, for example, a non-college-bound working class youth, has always enjoyed working on cars and is certain that he will become a professional mechanic once he leaves high school. As he told the interviewer:

When I was five, I started thinking about cars and how I just like working with them. I guess it must be in my blood because my father and uncles are also mechanics... No one is pushing me into it. It was myself. I really, really want to do that.

For another youth from a single-parent home in one of the poorer boroughs of New York, planning his future is very important. As he put it: “I want to do everything right so I have to have a plan.” Although he was only 16 at the time of the interview, he was fairly certain that he would become a chef. He enjoys cooking at home with his mother and already has made some initial inquiries into culinary arts schools in Manhattan.

The confidence with which these young men approach their futures is tempered for some by knowledge that they can change their minds. Jerry, for example, who is pursuing his dream to work in aerodynamics, worries that the classes may be too intense for him to manage. He was “really churning about it” before he realized that he could change his major if he found out that aerodynamics “wasn’t really working.” For Vincent, the one rational decision-maker that said he did not feel he was ready to commit to a particular career, this was less of an option. At the time of the in-depth interview he said he thought he wanted to enter the priesthood—a decision that is not easily reversed. Such decisions should not be made lightly and the fact that he was proceeding cautiously is a sign of maturity.

## ***Information Gathering and Follow Through***

In the rational decision-making model, youth gather information about possible careers systematically and thoughtfully. They draw on multiple sources of information; reflect on their interests, goals, strengths and weaknesses; and find careers that are consistent with them. Over time, their goals become increasingly focused and they begin to take the steps necessary to realize them.

The rational decision-makers in our sample approached career decision-making in this way. However, there were some noticeable differences in terms of the time or level of effort they gave to the various phases. Those who had longstanding interests in a particular field or activity, for example, had collected pertinent information and experience over the course of their lives. As they approached high school graduation, then, their attention was focused on collecting information about the training that was required and where they could get it. Jerry, for example, knew that there were two possible paths he could follow to reach his goal of either flying or designing special-use aircraft like the Apache helicopter. During his last two years of high school, he explored the Internet and other sources for information on colleges that offered related programs and the prerequisites he needed in order to be accepted. He also took the ASVAB and discussed his interests with military recruiters. When he found out that he was ineligible for the flight program because his vision was bad and he was obese, he decided that he was not interested in exploring other options within the military. At the time of the in-depth interview, he was enrolled in a summer math program to refresh the skills he would need to succeed in engineering school.

The son of a successful self-made business man who wanted eventually to join his fathers' business, aggressively pursued employers who could provide him with experience that would supplement his college coursework. He was so certain about his future career that he jumped right into the follow-through stage as soon as he became old enough to work. In his words:

I've always wanted to go into business... I had barely turned 16 [before] I started bugging companies for a job. I wrote them and sent little resumes and just bugged them. So they gave me the opportunity to work there.

Since that time he has advanced in the company and enrolled in college "to learn all the proper skills and get certified."

The young man who was interested in radio production was equally driven. For him, however, it was difficult to gather information, since guidance counselors at school, his parents, and just about everyone he talked with about it knew less than he did. In his words:

It was really hard to talk to someone because a lot of people don't think like the audio world and the production world as something you could get a job in and make money doing it. So it was really hard to tell people that you wanted to be someone who worked in [audio] production. Everyone wants you to be like some kind of businessperson or do some typical job and the job that I wanted to do is not very typical. So I mean it wasn't really a matter of going to someone because they didn't know too much about it as far as how many people are engineers and what they do and that people can get paid to do that and get paid very well.

He was not easily discouraged, however. On his own he sought out experts in the field who could answer his questions and his parents questions about the profession:

I went to people who I knew who were in the production field [to get the information I needed]. They were the ones who I actually talked to as far as what steps I needed to take to get into that field. I just pretty much walked in and got to know them and became friends that way.

He also read trade magazines and it was there that he learned about the institute in Arizona that provides the specialized training he so coveted.

At the time of the in-depth interview, he was completing his coursework there and eagerly looking forward to his first “real” job.

Most of these young men are from middle and upper class homes, where their parents encouraged them to reflect on their interests, gather information, and make their own decisions. As discussed earlier in this chapter, youth from working and lower class homes had very different relationships with their parents. Most encouraged their sons to work hard in school, but provided little guidance in terms of what they needed to do to develop or focus their thinking about careers. Others were overly prescriptive—advising them on which career to pursue and, therefore, pre-empting two critical phases in career development—information gathering and self-reflection. Young men from these environments who evolved into rational decision-makers either: 1) stood up to their parents and declared their independence to pursue careers that interested them, as the young man who wanted to become a film critic did, or 2) made connections with adults outside the home who were willing and able to help them gather information and explore career possibilities.

Very few working or lower class youth stood up to their parents. However, several benefited from mentoring-type relationships with adults who took the time to care. Julio, for one, had given little or no thought to what he might do after high school until he was in his senior year. The watershed moment for him was when his chemistry teacher admonished his class for “partying instead of studying,” and warned that it is up to them to choose between them because “whatever you choose will determine your life.” This made a strong impression on Julio, who wanted to accomplish something in his life and serve as a role model for his younger siblings. He stayed after class that day to ask the teacher for advice about planning his future. This initiative paid off:

He took me like a son and stuff and just took me places career-wise... He took me to a pharmaceutical company and a hospital...

and I got to like shadow doctors and stuff for the entire day.

Subsequently, he talked to counselors at local colleges about the various courses they offered in the health field. He read the catalogs and discussed the possibilities with his teacher. After graduation, however, he was still not entirely sure about the direction he would head. He thought about joining the Navy, but really did not want to leave his family. He volunteered to work in a hospital and enrolled in classes at a community college near his parents’ home. By the end of his first year, he was sure that he wanted to pursue a career in medical technology. At the time of the in-depth interview, he had just completed his associates’ degree and was accepted to continue in a baccalaureate program at a local four-year college.

Another young man has had a mentor through the College Partnership program since he was in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The mentor talks to him about his classes and “also tries to find out what I want to be when I grow up so he can help me out.” They have visited colleges together and, since he likes math, attended informational meetings that “explain in detail about different types of engineering which have to do with math and science.” With some encouragement from his mentor, he has also attended informational meetings with military recruiters on his own. Originally, his main interest in the military was to get money for college, since his parents are poor. However, the recruiters also “opened my views and made them broader” to the point that he may be interested in making a career for himself in the military.

Others have developed positive relationships with guidance counselors who are interested in helping them get enrolled in culinary arts schools and other training programs that interest them before they leave high school. These and other young men from disadvantaged backgrounds have benefited tremendously from these mentoring or advisory relationships. It is reasonable to conclude that these relationships accelerated their passage from diffuse to rational decision-making.

## **Realism**

The plans that rational decision-makers have for their futures are generally very realistic. As presented, these young men have given considerable thought to what they would like to become in life. They have collected information about their career choices and have a fairly good understanding of the level of effort and resources needed to achieve them. Also, they have assessed their own personal strengths and weaknesses, which they have used to select or reject specific career options. In the few instances when they decided to pursue careers in spite of known shortcomings, they took supplementary classes or other appropriate action to shore-up the skills they thought they would need to be successful.

A few, like Paul, have very ambitious plans. This precocious young man aspires to one day become president of the United States. He recognizes the ambitiousness of this goal, but with a little luck and a lot of hard work thinks he might have what it takes to achieve it. At the same time, however, he is not putting all his eggs in this one basket. As he explained:

I'm pretty confident to my future plans and they're pretty ambitious. So I think as long as I stick to it, I think if I don't accomplish them all I'll at least have accomplished something.

He said he has a "thirst for knowledge," and it was apparent that he had studied the lives of former presidents that he wanted to emulate. Many, he said, studied law at prestigious universities, which was his first-tier career goal. They also served in the military, which he respected, but viewed as a distraction:

When I think of the military I think of it as a commitment... That would be a large commitment of my time and something that I'm not willing to give of myself. I'm not willing to give that much of my time to something when I could be learning all these other things that I'd like to be learning...although it's not a completely unattractive commitment... It's occurred to

me, like maybe applying to a place like the Naval Academy in Annapolis or West Point... But the ivy league schools I'm going to apply to seem to have a name and a reputation and their facilities attract me a lot more with respect to satisfying this thirst for knowledge.

By the end of the in-depth interview it was clear that Paul had plans that were indeed genuine and realistic.

These young men also appear rational and realistic in terms of other aspects of their lives. For example, nearly all the young men in this decision-making cluster plan to marry and start a family one day. However, they view serious courtship and family formation as distractions that will compromise achievement of their career goals. Once married they believe their priorities might change or compromise the flexibility they need, for example, to move to another part of the country to pursue their studies. For these reasons, they have made conscious decisions to set these plans and activities on the backburner until they have completed their education.

## **Diffuse Decision-Makers**

Diffuse decision-makers are those who generally: 1) do not feel ready to make good decisions about their future lives; 2) have done little or nothing to explore their interests or seek information about career options; and/or 3) tend to be unrealistic in terms of their abilities or the amount of education or other resources that are needed to "get ahead." The majority grew up in working and lower class homes. Compared to rational-decision-makers, they appear to have weaker attachments with adults who might help them develop more focused career goals.

Apart from these general characteristics, however, diffuse decision-makers are an eclectic group. As will be shown, some are young, college-oriented youth who are in the early stages of thinking about their careers. Others, with more limited abilities, have some ideas about what they might do, but do not know how



to get started. Yet others appear to be pursuing a particular path, but are not committed to it.

## **Readiness**

The majority of diffuse decision-makers either said they were not ready or not comfortable making decisions about future careers. For a few, their indecisiveness or lack of direction appears to be a function of their youthful enthusiasm for diverse subjects. Unlike their age-mates in the rational decision-making cluster, these young men are in a nascent stage of career development. Sixteen-year-old Joseph, for example, is fairly certain that he will attend college. However, he has diverse interests and is only beginning to consider their implications in terms of what he might study:

I think I need more knowledge and wisdom [before I'm ready to make good decisions about the career I will pursue]... I'm interested in so much stuff that I'm not really sure what I want to do yet... I love the outdoors...and I've been thinking about architecture...or Marine Biology... something that involves the outdoors.

He admits that he knows very little about either of these careers. However, like other pre-rational decision-makers, he is motivated to collect information that will help him attain focus or narrow his interests. As he told the interviewer:

I don't know how much architecture involves the outdoors, but...I saw a book or magazine where it tells you all the different jobs that there are... I plan on going onto the Internet and looking at these different occupations... I do want people's ideas too, but I just want to kind of come up with this on my own. Find something that I like just for me... I don't want to be doing something for my whole life that I don't like.

Although he does not feel ready to commit to a particular career path, Joseph—and many of the other diffuse decision-makers in our sample—is

certain that he wants to get married and start a family in his early twenties.

Although younger than many of the other diffuse decision-makers in our sample, Joseph appears to have greater career maturity. A much larger number appear to live in the present and, for all intents and purposes, approach the future one step at a time. In the words of one young man who was still in school because he did not have enough credits to graduate with his class:

I won't feel ready to make decisions about the future until after I graduate from high school. Right now I'm just thinking about the diploma... When I get out of school, then I can start thinking about the future and stuff.

Similarly, Thomas, a recent high school graduate, said that before graduation his major concern was “just focusing on my grades—keeping them straight in the A and B level.” He described himself as a slow learner and considered high school graduation a major achievement.

Another young man, whose only apparent interests are football and soccer, said he would like to avoid making any decisions for as long as possible. As he told the interviewer, he thinks his parents are much better judges of what is “good” for him:

I feel like whenever I have to make a decision, I'll do it, but...if the decision can be made for me, by my parents or someone who cares about me, then I'll let them take it. I only do what I have to...because they know what is best for me.

A few diffuse decision-makers said they felt ready to make good decisions about their futures. However, it is clear that their concept of readiness was different from that of rational decision-makers. One young man's perceptions of readiness, for example, were based on the fact that he is more mature than his age-mates:

I feel ready because I'm very mature. I'm engaged [to marry]. So I feel I have to make

those kinds of decisions already. That's the reason why I'm not into playing around or nothing like what other teenagers who just graduated do.

Another, who was motivated "to do something" with his life, said he "was ready to respond to any opportunity."

### ***Information Gathering***

Several diffuse decision-makers are aware that good decisions will require considered judgements based on information and self-reflection. Joseph, for example, is beginning to think through what is important to him and plans to sit in on some classes at a local community college "just to see what they're like."

The majority, however, appear less inclined to explore or collect information about career options. Also, there seems to be a dearth of adults in their lives who challenge them to think about their futures or provide information or resources that would help them. One young man who clearly was interested in "doing something" after high school, said he had no one who could help him "focus more on things." He has tried to establish a relationship with a guidance counselor at school, without success "since they are always being changed." The only time one will see him is when it is time to schedule classes. "It's just like kind of hard," he said, "I really don't get a chance to get to know them."

Several less anxious diffuse decision-makers had superficial plans, based on information or opportunities that appeared surreptitiously. Crecencio for example, said he was thinking about going to a trade school that he saw advertised on television:

An ad came on TV one time... Go to ITT to study electronics... It sounded like it wasn't too hard... I wrote down the number they gave to call... But I haven't called them yet.

Similarly, another young man said his mother wanted him to go to ITT and learn "mechanical work and how to fix things." Although he said

he was considering this as an option, any notions he has about ITT are based solely on a discussion he had with a stranger on a bus:

I was in a city bus and I met this guy...and he had this briefcase and it said ITT. I asked him and he told me about it... He looked like he liked it when he told me about it.

The young man who said he was comfortable letting his parents make decisions for him, was no better off. As he told the in-depth interviewer, his parents have already "chosen the college he would attend and everything." However, all he knew about it was that it is "close to home and it's a four-year college." He wants to play on the sports team there, and hopes that he might be recruited to a professional team after he graduates. Beyond his interest in sports and a desire to "get a good paying job" that does not require him to "sit at a desk all day," however, his interest in college appears questionable. He got drunk the night before he took the SATs and suffered through them with a hangover. He said he had no idea what college would be like, and showed no discernible interest in getting information that might help him prepare. His approach to the future is diffuse and appears entirely passive: "I have no idea what college will be like... I'll know when I get there. It's a big question mark."

Similarly, he has no idea what life might be like when he leaves college. He described it as a "scary thought," adding:

It's really blind to me what life will be after college. Like right now I'm like, oh yeah, I'll be going to college, so it's like even though it's in the future and I don't know exactly where I'm going to be going and stuff, I can say that I'm headed that way. But after college, then I don't know... I don't see myself after college.

Several non-college-oriented diffuse decision-makers have given some thought to joining the Armed Forces. Two youth, both with limited abilities, thought it would provide them with opportunities to gain independence from their

parents, improve their self-discipline, and develop occupational skills. When they were rejected, therefore, they were deeply disappointed. Moreover, they had no other plans or resources to fall back on. At the time of the in-depth interviews, neither had steady work. Beto was doing odd jobs for neighbors and looking for jobs in the “help wanted” section of the local paper. Thomas was proud that he was able to earn enough to pay the insurance on his pick-up truck, but knew that his job at the restaurant would never pay enough for him to get a place of his own and start a family. He has considered enrolling in a program that would certify him to drive diesel trucks, but has not actively pursued it. Also, he has talked to a friend of his father about a job in dry walling and his brother-in-law who is thinking about forming a painting company in another state. He has no experience in either of these jobs but would like to try them because they offer steady work and income and provide medical and other benefits. At the time of the in-depth interviews, he was planning to help his father’s friend install drywall when he is not working at the restaurant.

Another young man, a high school senior, is also beginning to think about what he might do after high school. Based on his experiences in Junior-ROTC (JROTC), he thought he might be interested in joining the military. He has also thought about becoming either a postal worker or an electrician. A major consideration for him is to find something that will pay enough to support a family. He has been encouraged by members of his extended family to join the Air Force, but has not sought other sources of information. The decision, he said, “will probably come to him during his senior year.” Similarly, another who said some days he “feels like going [into the military], but then it’s I don’t know,” will ultimately decide based on “how [he] feels when [he] comes out of high school.” He too gave little indication that he was seeking additional information about the military or other possible careers that might help him decide.

## **Realism**

Information gathering and self-reflection are crucial tasks in youth’s development of education and career aspirations and plans that are realistically attainable. Clearly, most of the diffuse decision-makers in our sample had not addressed these tasks in any systematic or satisfactory way. The result is an obvious lack of fit between what these young men like or are good at, the education or training they get, and the careers they aspire to attain. For example, a little information and a caring adult would have saved one young man “who is easily frustrated and has a short attention span” from the disappointment he felt when the Air Force did not admit him to their flight training program. Similarly, information gathering and self-reflection might have dissuaded a young man who does not work well in structured or hierarchical organizations from pursuing a career as a prison guard.

## **Disconnected Youth**

Several of the young men in our sample are best described as disconnected youth. They are very immature and have engaged in little or no exploration of their interests or abilities. They remain firmly committed to childhood-based values and expectations—making excuses for themselves and blaming others for their immobility; and show no sign that they are either anxious to change or susceptible to influences that might jostle them from this state of arrested development.

All of the disconnected youth in our sample had graduated from high school; all but one were from working or lower class neighborhoods. One, for example, lived with his parents and ten siblings in a poor neighborhood in northern New Jersey. His father was an evangelical minister who brought his family to the United States when he was beckoned to do so by God. He takes life “one day at a time.” At the time of the in-depth interviews, he was neither employed nor attending school. Previously he had worked for about five months as an auto detailer at a car wash before he was fired because “the boss

could not get along with him.” He appears content hanging around the house and occasionally playing drums with a musical group at his father’s church. He does not want to ever have to work for anyone else again—a worrisome declaration from a young man with no discernible skills or interests.

Ray, another disconnected youth, also takes life one day at a time. For more than a year since he graduated from high school, he has done little more than hang around the house, occasionally helping his father do door-to-door evangelical work and taking photographs “anytime he picked up money on a street corner” to buy film.

None of the disconnected youth in our sample accept responsibility for their actions. Ray attributed his lack of career or other plans to his parents, who are very unhappy with their jobs. Another, who appears to suffer from delusions of grandeur, said he was so busy “keeping his high school from falling apart” that he did not realize until the school year was almost over that the guidance office had failed to “call him to speak with a guidance counselor about financial aid or college applications.” As a result of their alleged ineptitude, he ended up at an inferior local school instead of Harvard or Yale.

As already mentioned, the young man from New Jersey did not accept any responsibility for losing his job. In his eyes, his boss was the problem. Further, he was taking no initiative when it came to “starting his own business.” Instead, he was content to wait until his father was able to earn enough discretionary income to purchase the equipment and supplies he needed to start his own detailing business. He estimated that the cost of these were \$1,000 or \$2,000 and that it would take his father several months to get it together. “Little by little he will get me the stuff and then when I start my own business then I’ll pay him back whatever he spent on it and take it from there.”

None of the disconnected youth in our sample ever seriously considered the military. However, several had unsatisfactory interactions with military recruiters. The young man who single-handedly “saved his high school,” for

example, said the recruiters he spoke with were jar-heads, since he had more top-secret information than they had. Another, who is 80 pounds overweight, said the recruiter he met was a “very rude guy.”

## Summary

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This chapter described the life circumstances of young men of Spanish descent and contextual factors associated with differences in their approaches to thinking about, and planning for, the future. Important differences were observed within and between college-bound and non-college-bound youth along the dimensions of social class, socialization experiences in the home and age of immigration. No discernible differences emerged among the young men on the basis of their countries of origin.

Approximately one-half of the sampled youth were either attending college at the time of the interviews or had plans to attend college. Among the college-oriented youth, important differences emerged between those from middle- and upper-middle class families and those from working and lower class families. Indeed, social class proved to be a proxy for a host of characteristics and experiences that shape the young men’s lives and approaches to the future.

The majority of college-oriented youth from the more economically secure families are second and third generation Americans whose parents or grandparents came to the United States to attend college, to avail themselves of professional opportunities or to escape untenable political situations. They grew up in mostly two-parent households where English was the main or only language spoken. Higher education was almost taken for granted and, because they were not constrained financially, they had opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities that enriched their education and exposed them to a variety of careers, avocations and outlooks. Some had fairly well defined education or career goals, usually based on information-gathering efforts to match individual interests or talents with college

programs and careers. Others were still searching. Their parents, who either held professional careers or owned their own businesses, served as role models and provided information as well as emotional and financial support, but did not attempt to direct them into particular career fields or lifestyles.

In contrast, the majority of college-oriented youth from working and lower class households are the first, or among the first, in their families to go to college and are more likely to communicate with their parents in Spanish. In most cases, their parents or grandparents came to the United States in search of better lives for themselves and their children. Their parents work in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations and do not have the resources that are needed to provide the array of options to their children that middle class parents can. As a result, the young men from working and lower class families appear less connected to college and college life. Many attend 2-year community colleges with hopes of transferring to local 4-year institutions for their junior and senior years. In addition to attending school, many also work full-time to earn money for tuition, transportation and textbooks. Although their parents had limited knowledge about college and professional careers, they were much more likely to prescribe particular courses of study or careers for their sons than were middle class parents.

The majority of non-college-bound youth in the sample were from working and lower class households. Most were born outside of the United States. Some planned to attend trade school; others accepted low-paying jobs after high school in order to support themselves and contribute to the financial well being of their families.

This chapter also looked at youth's generalized approaches to decision-making within these contexts. Decision-making style refers to the overall manner or approach that individuals take to thinking about and planning their futures. We observed three main approaches to decision-making:

- purposive or rational,

- diffuse, and
- disconnected.

Differences in approach to decision-making were evident in readiness to make decisions, actions taken to achieve goals, and the realism evident in goals.

Purposive or rational decision-makers felt ready to make decisions, often incremental, about current activities to move them toward eventual goals. They gather information about possible careers thoughtfully and systematically, drawing on multiple sources of information. Information gathering activities were fostered in middle and upper class homes. Few youth from working or lower class homes were able to overcome the handicap of not having parents who encouraged gathering and reflecting on information about future careers. The goals of rational decision-makers were generally realistic with respect to their own limitations and their goals.

Diffuse decision-makers generally do not feel ready to make decisions about their future lives, have done little or nothing to explore their interests or seek information about career options, and tend to be unrealistic in terms of their abilities or the amount of education or other resources that are needed to "get ahead." The majority grew up in working and lower class homes. Compared to rational-decision-makers, they appear to have weaker attachments to adults who might help them develop more focused career goals.

Several of the young men in our sample are best described as "disconnected" youth. They are very immature and have engaged in little or no exploration of their interests or abilities. They remain firmly committed to childhood-based values and expectations—making excuses for themselves and blaming others for their immobility; and show no signs that they are either anxious to change or susceptible to influences that might jostle them from this state of arrested development. All but one of the disconnected youth in our sample were from working or lower class neighborhoods.

### 3. UNDERSTANDING YOUTH PROPENSITY

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This chapter presents findings on propensity for military service. Particular attention is given to the youth's images of the military and how likely they are to enlist in the next couple of years. The chapter is organized around three propensity groupings that emerged from our analyses of their responses to questions on the YATS survey and the in-depth interviews. The first section profiles Fence-Sitters—i.e., youth who mentioned the military as a possible option for themselves, but were uncertain about whether they would pursue it or not. Of all the young men in this sample, Fence-Sitters expressed the greatest propensity for service.<sup>1</sup> The second section profiles a small cluster of Shifters—i.e., youth who thought about joining the military at one time, but have since decided against it. Finally, the third section describes Non-Joiners—the single largest propensity group in this study. As a group, Non-Joiners have given the least amount of consideration to military service and are the least likely to ever join.

#### Fence-Sitters

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Young men in the Fence-Sitters propensity group are those who mentioned the military as a possible option for themselves, but were uncertain about whether they would pursue it or not. Two clusters emerged from our analyses of their interview transcripts. The first cluster is composed of youth that are attracted to the *intangible benefits* of military service—e.g., structure and experiences that will help them become responsible and self-confident adults. The second cluster includes those who are attracted to *tangible benefits* of military service—in particular, money for college.

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<sup>1</sup> Unlike previous studies, none of the young men in this sample expressed firm intentions of joining. This is not to say that none of these young men will enlist. Previous studies have shown that youth's interest in military service can change, and that some unlikely candidates actually enlist.

#### Intangible Benefits: Character Development

The largest cluster of Fence-Sitters have favorable impressions of the military—particularly in terms of the challenges it would provide them to become mentally and physically stronger and the opportunities it would present to develop marketable skills. The majority of these youth grew up in working or lower class families. Approximately equal numbers are enrolled as students at the high school and college levels. Several reported learning problems.

Few of these young men have much concrete information about the military. Most of what they know has come from television and movies. Several have relatives or friends who have served in the military here or in their countries of origin. However, they have not had much contact with these potential sources of influence. About one-half have had some contact with recruiters, though none are satisfied with the quality or depth of information they have received.

#### Motivation for Joining

The majority of these youth said their motivation for joining the military centered around opportunities for discipline, self-improvement, maturation and independence. In addition, several also associated military service with tangible benefits, such as getting paid for learning new job skills; opportunities to save money, since their room and board would be paid for; and seeing the world. These tangible benefits, however, did not figure prominently in their thinking about enlistment.

**Discipline and self improvement.** These youth believe the military would provide them the discipline and structure they need to develop skills and become more self-confident. One

youth has observed these sorts of changes in friends who have joined:

I know people who have been [in the military]. Their attitudes are different and they seem pretty sure about themselves. They don't doubt about doing things. They just do it. I think it would help me be a better leader...more of a straight-minded person.

Along the same lines, another youth thinks service in the military would help him become more focused. "[Military service would] get me to focus more on the things I need to focus on," he said. It would get me to be more confident into doing it until I get it right."

***Maturity and independence.*** Compared to the civilian sector, many in this cluster believe that young people are expected to take on greater responsibilities in the military. These higher expectations, in turn, would facilitate their transition into mature and capable adults. Many also believe that service experience would provide them with the time and space they need to become independent of their families. One young man summed it up this way: "You wouldn't always have somebody there, you'd take care of yourself and your own things, you know. I would have to do things on my own [in the military]."

### ***Why Undecided***

Nearly all youth that are attracted mainly to the intangible benefits they associate with military service are in nascent stages of their career development. For the most part, the older youth in this cluster remain on the fence because they also are drawn to possibilities in the civilian sector. The younger youth have much hazier visions of the future. Their interests are generally less clear and the military is but one of several disparate career paths under consideration.

***Choosing among alternatives.*** Many of the older youth that are attracted to the intangible benefits of military service are toying with the

possibility of enlisting, but at the same time pursuing other interests. Samuel, for example, has a longstanding interest in music. "Since I was little," he said, "I've been really interested in music. I...write my own lyrics and I record." He is taking business classes at a local community college and hopes that one day he will be able to do something that combines these skills with his interests in music. In many respects, his interests in business and music have received greater support than have his interests in military service. His grandfather, who owns and operates restaurants, has encouraged him to follow in his footsteps. In his words:

My grandpa...was a business owner...a restaurant owner... Ever since I was little...I was always into business. I used to get suspended from school because I'd be selling things... My grandfather really stuffed that in my ear. Be your own owner. You should go further than I did.

The greatest source of support for military service comes from his grandmother and mother who see it as the most expedient way to get him to cut his hair and stop wearing baggy trousers and earrings.

Another, who is interested in pursuing a career in radiology, has explored possibilities for doing it on his own or doing it through the military. A high school teacher, who "took [him] like a son" to explore various careers in the health care field, influenced him to complete a two-year x-ray technician course. By the time of the in-depth interviews, he had his certification and was planning his next steps—i.e., either to transfer to a four-year college or to enlist in the military. Although still on the fence, it appears that he is leaning toward continuing his education at a four-year college. From conversations with a Navy recruiter, he understands that he would have to postpone or forsake plans to become a radiologist if he joins the military. As he explained:

Actually I saw it as an option... I went to a recruiter and I sat down and talked to him. He was telling me all these options I could do...all these careers... But not the one I



wanted—not radiology. If they had the same career, I would have gone.

***Vague perceptions and indecision.*** A large number of the younger Fence-Sitters who are impressed mainly by the intangible benefits of military service—and a few of the older ones—are thinking about their futures in broad terms and are not committed to any particular career or career path. Ricardo's life circumstances and approach to planning for his future are typical of the high school students in this cluster. Nine months—the time he has before graduation—seems like a long time and, for that reason, he does not feel compelled to make any decisions. As he explained:

I'm thinking if I go to college, what will I major in? If I go to the military what job opportunities I might take... Things like that... I'm still just a senior in high school... I mean, I'm still deciding on things I will do—like whether I should join the military or go to college... They are still crossing my mind here and there. I have about a year to think this over... I'm still gathering information...to see if this is the thing that I want to do... Basically, if it's something that I'm going to enjoy, something that's going to help in life in the future... Something that will give me a comfortable living style, financially.

Although he said he was “still gathering information,” his efforts to-date are limited to a few recruitment brochures he ran across at school more than a year before the in-depth interview. At the time, he was especially enamored with what the Marines promised. “The Marines just interested me more than the others,” he said. “It just got me thinking more on things I could do... I felt it was something that would help me more in like [getting] hands-on skills and discipline.” He mailed in the postcard that was attached to the brochure to get more information, but a year passed before he received any response. By that time, his interest had waned. At the time of the in-depth interview, he said he was leaning more toward college, though the military was still a possibility:

I am more stuck on college now...but I wouldn't just drop...the military...that easy. I'm trying to get information on the Air Force...because I just like planes... But I didn't catch the recruiter at the right time and the pamphlets aren't in school any more... I've tried calling... I'm thinking about aircraft maintenance... Maybe flying a plane or law enforcement. I guess my decision [will be] what I feel at the moment... What I feel towards it [after I graduate]. At the moment I can't really tell.

Like so many other high school students in this cluster, Ricardo wants to become a capable adult and a productive member of society. He is impressionable and looking for someone who might help guide his future. Assuming that he could qualify, a recruiter could make all the difference in his life.

An older youth, Michael, said he has dreamed his whole life about one day joining the military. “Talking to friends that have already joined,” he said, “makes [his determination to join] even stronger. I've already decided [to join]... I don't have enough information... I'm going to try and get some information.” At the same time, he talked enthusiastically about plans to complete a four-year degree in computer science. He also mentioned that he is afraid to enlist in the military because he does not speak English as well as the others. He is afraid that he either will be laughed at or will misinterpret important commands. At the same time, however, he also talked enthusiastically about plans to complete a four-year degree program in computer science:

### ***Barriers to Enlistment***

Among young men who are mainly attracted to the intangible benefits of military service, a sizable number also mentioned concerns that make it a less attractive alternative. These include concerns about rough treatment and separation from their families and friends.

***Rough treatment.*** Among these youth, a major barrier to enlistment is perceptions of rough treatment, especially during the first six months



or so of service. As one young man put it: “My friends told me there are hard times [in the military]...like when you first get in people don’t treat you really good.” Others were put-off by “being yelled at so much” and the excessive drills one is required to perform.

**Family Separation.** A few youth are concerned about being away from home. “To break it down,” one young man told the interviewer, “it’s the going away that bothers me. That kind of life...is a lot different and I’m like in a little comfort zone around here... You know what I mean?” Several others worried because they would have to leave younger siblings behind. This is problematic, they said, because their siblings need them to help negotiate opportunities and cultures that are not accessible or understood by their foreign-born parents. “Just the time away from home [is a problem],” said one. “I’m pretty close to my sister. She’s little... I just want to be a figure for her.”

## **Tangible Benefits: Money for College**

The remaining Fence-Sitters are drawn to the college tuition benefits associated with military service. These young men are rational decision-makers from lower middle and working class households.

### **Motivation for Joining**

Among these young men, interest in military service is driven by three factors. The first is a strongly held belief that college is the key to success. Second, the military is one sure way of getting money to finance their higher education; and third, they have at least tacit approval from their parents that joining the military would be an acceptable source of money for college.

**College is key.** Among the young men in this cluster, college education is the single most important factor in intergenerational social mobility. Ramiro, for example, has learned “from those who have jobs...that you need more education.” He is determined to go to college. “With a college degree,” he said, “I’ll be better

off.” Many are the first in their families to graduate from high school and enroll in any sort of college program. “I’ll be the first in my family to ever do that and it will give me a good sense of feeling, a good feeling inside.... I want to make [my parents] proud being the first one to do this.” There is considerable support from family members, then, to do whatever is necessary to continue their education.

**Military provides financial support.** These college-bound youth are attracted to the military’s provision of college credits and tuition benefits. One high school student, for example, told the interviewer that if he did not get sufficient financial assistance for college from other sources, he would definitely enlist. Should things work out that way, he may even consider a military career:

[The main reason I might enlist is] probably because of the help I would need economically. I know that the military gives money for military service for college.... If I do like it, I may want to get involved full-time. That would be another career choice.

Another young man—a junior in college—said he would consider enlisting after graduation if he needed the money to repay his student loans. Although his parents have offered to help him, he wants to demonstrate his maturity and independence by paying them off on his own.

**Family support.** The majority of these youth said their parents have given them at least tacit approval for financing their post-secondary education or training through service in the military. Several also have support from members of their extended families who have served in their countries of origin. Ramiro—and his mother—have been influenced positively by an uncle who served in the Bolivian Air Force:

My uncle is in the Air Force in Bolivia and when I was little he would take me around the base and show me around... I liked how you have to work to move up and stuff like that. It’s like if you do stuff, then you get acknowledged for it... [If I enlist] my

mother would like me to join the Air Force [like her brother did].

Most, however, merely stated that their parents would support any decision they made—including enlistment—as long as it was productive and something they wanted to do. One young man who told his parents he might try to finance his college education through enlistment in the military said: “Everything was fine with [my mom] just as long as I’m doing good. She wants me to do good and learn something. My Dad said it was fine also.”

### ***Why Undecided***

Nearly all youth that are attracted mainly to the tangible benefits of military service are rational decision-makers. As such, they are in the process of exploring various alternatives including the military. Also, any decisions they make will be based on information they have gathered and assessed as a part of the decision-making process. As described below, the majority of these youth are still in high school. They are gathering information and exploring their options for attending college—with or without the help of the military.

***Alternative Interests.*** For this cluster of Fence-Sitters, it is clear that their primary motivation is to attend college and continue their education. If necessary, however, they will join the military to finance it. In the words of one young man—a high school senior:

I really want to go to college... I’ve never had a thought of not going to college. I mean I know right after high school that’s where I’ll be. I’m just going to apply everywhere and see where I get accepted. I’ll look at my options from there with every college and see what will suit me best—economically and education-wise... The only other thing I may be thinking of is maybe going into some kind of military...because of the help I would need economically... I know that the military gives money for college. I’m pretty sure

about those two choices. There’s nothing else I pay attention to.

Another young man’s participation in a corporate mentoring program has exposed him to a wide array of possibilities. His mentor—a banker—has assumed a “fatherly” role and is helping him to reflect on his interests and to prepare for college. “He tries to find out what I want to be when I grow up, so he can help me out,” he said. Together, they are visiting colleges and talking to people in jobs that utilize math and science—his two favorite subjects in school. These experiences seem to be channeling his interests toward college and a civilian career in engineering. In his words:

I’ve never had a thought of not going to college. I mean I know right after high school that’s where I’ll be.... I was thinking about engineering.... I guess the type of work that it is. I went to a meeting once and they just explained in detail about different types of engineering that had to do with math and science. I like math a lot so it gave me a pretty good interest in what I heard.

Like other Fence-Sitters who are motivated by the tangible benefits, this youth worries that he may not have sufficient resources to fund his college education. The military, therefore, remains a possibility.

***Information quality.*** These young men are rational decision-makers. Generally, they have realistic notions about their capabilities and tastes. They are also information gatherers with considerable support from non-familial adults who have the time and resources to guide them. From their accounts, it is apparent that they have explored colleges and civilian options much more thoroughly than military options. A few have talked to recruiters; others have friends or family members who have served. However, beyond some of the more widely publicized benefits of military service—e.g., college tuition benefits and stereotypical images of boot camp—they know very little.

## **Barriers to Enlistment**

These youth expressed two major barriers to enlistment—i.e., concerns about the trustworthiness of information that is available from recruiters and concerns about the way recruits are treated.

**Credibility gap.** One youth's depiction of untrustworthy recruiters is representative. His perceptions are based on information from friends who have enlisted:

I have friends who have gone into the Service already... It's not worth going in there because if you want to get an AA degree, it's pretty hard. You have to go to the school they tell you to. They don't guarantee you nothing. They don't guarantee you the base of your choice because sometimes there isn't enough room. They don't guarantee you the job... They tell you they will guarantee you things, but then that's not true sometimes.

Several other Fence-Sitters who are mainly interested in the tangible benefits of service also said recruiters will promise anything just to get young people to enlist. Once they are in, however, they do not follow through on those promises.

**Rough treatment.** An even larger number of these youth said they are put-off by reports of hazing in the military. As one youth explained: "Piercing those ribbons on the chest... I'd be scared... That's a bad thing. It's like a tradition and that's a bad thing." In addition, they did not approve of practices that berated people and all the "yelling of orders" that goes on in the military.

## **Shifters**

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Shifters are those who had thought about joining the military, but were no longer considering it at the time of the in-depth interviews. This section discusses factors driving their initial interest in the military and reasons why they decided not to

join. As will be shown, the majority of Shifters were in a diffuse phase of career development when military service was under consideration. The majority grew up in lower middle and working class families.

## **Factors Driving Initial Interest in the Military**

Among the Shifters in our sample, two major clusters of youth emerged. The first are those who considered military service at a time in their lives when they were searching for a niche. The second are those who were attracted to occupations or career fields that are often associated with the military, such as aviation.

### **Searching for a Niche**

Uncertainty was the primary factor motivating their initial interest in the military. Some were juniors in high school who saw "blanks" when they looked into their futures; others, a couple years into college, still were not sure of their majors. One, for example, initially saw the military as a way to get out of the house and postpone decisions about college majors and the future. As he explained:

Well I almost went into the Marines... It was weird because the mind set I was in at the time was I was very, very much into getting out of high school and then getting away from the environment I was in. I guess that's something a lot of people go through during like the last year of high school. They just want to move on or go on with their lives. I don't know, I just went through a point where I didn't know what I wanted to do or where I wanted to go. So I pretty much tried several options to try and get a job and not go to school. Go into the military and have them pay for school or just going into the military and then once I was done with the four years, just go back to school.

Although he had uncles and cousins in the Service at the time, he really had not considered

it an option until he happened upon a recruiting booth at his high school's college fair:

We had one of those college fairs and there was a booth set up [by recruiters]... I was just passing by and I saw it and it just piqued my interest a little. I decided it wouldn't hurt to try this, just check it out... I just filled out one of the applications I guess for like an appointment and they gave me a call... They gave me a call about a week after the college fair... Then the day before Thanksgiving I was at their office.

When he told his mother that he had made an appointment with a recruiter, she was not surprised since several of her brothers and her brothers' sons were in the Service. Also, she was pleased that he would be eligible for college tuition benefits that would enable him to escape the burden of student loan debts. She offered to arrange contact with the uncles if at any time he had questions about the military or wanted their guidance.

Another young man, whose mother encouraged him to join JROTC when he was a freshman in high school, said his experiences in JROTC led him to consider enlistment. As he explained:

When I began high school, my mom wanted me to join the ROTC program. It was her idea because she knew about the program. So I joined and throughout the year they taught you discipline and many other things. But at the same time they encouraged us to like go to the military. They were like 'join the military or you have no life.' The military became my option during high school. We had different people coming in... Different officers, different soldiers and everything coming in and telling us about their roles. They just said that after you graduate from high school, you join the military and that's the best thing that could happen in your life. But no one ever asked about college or anything like that. I wanted to go to college like my friends. That was like my goal in life. I think what encouraged me to go into the military was the ROTC class.

During the summer before his senior year in high school he actually signed papers that effectively placed him in the delayed entry program while he finished up school. Mostly, it seems, he wanted to have some plan—even a tentative one—for life after graduation. As he explained, he wanted to do it all—go to college and go into the military, since he had some friends that were planning to go to college and others who were planning to enlist in the Armed Forces. Since he had far more knowledge about the military from ROTC than he had about college, he set his sites on the Army. As he explained:

I was in JROTC for four years in high school... Also I had friends who were doing the academic field and those who were interested in the military. I had all these different people with different thoughts and ideas and everything and I was very envious. I wanted to go to college and go into the military... I wanted to do both, but you can't have both things at the same time... So I knew if I got to the end of my high school years, I knew that I had to decide. I had to do something. So the summer after my junior year... I went to a recruiter and talked to him and everything. He gave me brochures, pamphlets and everything and I read through them... We went to the base and everything where they have all the military officers and military offices where they give you the exams and everything and I scored really high so they wanted me to join... I signed documents and everything. I think I even swore, but not the swearing that I would go now. I was swearing that I would join the military some time in the future.

### ***Interest in Specialized Jobs***

About one-half of all Shifters in our sample were initially drawn to the military because they were interested in specialized military training—mostly in the field of aviation. "I know I want to fly," said one. "That was kind of a dream I've always had. If there was anything I did in the Air Force, I did want to fly...[whether] jets, helicopters or regular planes."

Listening to these youth talk about the Air Force and flying, one could easily conclude that they are rational decision-makers who have been preparing their whole lives to become aviators in the Air Force. However, most are dreamers. Expectations that they could enter flight school or perform related jobs in the military right out of high school were very unrealistic.

## **Reasons for Deciding Against Military Service**

Although nearly all the Shifters went on to prepare for careers in the civilian sector, none said they decided against the military to pursue alternative plans. Instead, the reasons they gave for not enlisting centered on concerns over the treatment of soldiers and unsatisfactory or unsatisfying job assignments.

## **Negative Assessment**

About one-half of these youth said that at some point in the enlistment process they became aware of aspects of the military that simply frightened them. The tipping point for Recindo, for example, was a Marine recruitment video:

About five minutes after I got out of the Marines office—after watching the video—I was like so scared. It was like one of those scary programs...about how the Marines work and how they make you a man. It was just like really brainwashing and I'm not into that... I was interested at first because at first I didn't really know what I wanted to do and my mother told me if you wanted to just apply to the Armed Services, go with the GI Bill and you won't have to worry about loans and stuff.

This information was a real eye-opener for him, since it confirmed everything his friends had told him, i.e., that when you join, you become a jarhead—someone who has his head filled with things, like duties and military ways of thinking. “They put ideas in your head,” he said. “They’re just filling this jar with their ideas.”

Another was frightened by stories he heard from veterans about the atrocities of war and the harsh treatment of soldiers. “The things they told me,” he said, “made me so afraid of going into the military.”

I talked to many people...because I wanted to find out... Many are sick right now. I met a guy who was in Bosnia. He lost his arm... He said they sent him to the most obnoxious missions. They make you do the most obnoxious things and if you don't [do them] they will send you to jail.

Another older friend of his from JROTC joined the military and dropped out because she could not tolerate the way she and other recruits were treated there:

I had friends...that went into the military when I was a junior [in high school]. Then I didn't hear from them and one day I see Reese and she had dropped out of the military. She said that it was terrible and very abusive. They don't care about you. She said it was just terrible. You had to follow certain people and she said that if you didn't follow orders from certain people you were either punished or they did something bad to you.

Other friends who had joined told him it was “not what they expected, but it was okay.” By the time he had talked to them, however, he had pretty much made up his mind not to enlist. “Hearing that it was okay, he said, was “just another turn-off. He would have to have told me it was the best thing in the world [to change my mind at that point].”

## **Unsatisfactory Job Assignments**

Without exception, the youth that wanted to pilot military planes were told they were not qualified. One was eliminated right off the bat on the basis of his ASVAB results and the fact that he wore glasses and was very tall. He proceeded to search for a job that would provide him with steady income and benefits. At the time of the in-depth interviews, he was working

with a friend of his fathers who was teaching him how to install drywall. Another was told that he was “overweight for his height” and did not have good enough vision to pilot planes. He too decided that he would not join the Service unless he could fly. He has since directed his attention to college where he plans to major in aeronautical engineering:

I figured if I couldn’t [pilot helicopters or planes in the military], I may as well do the next thing to it and that is design and make those kinds of things... It just snapped that I wanted to go to college. Once that kicked in, I think about the military once in a while... But now I’ve gotten myself into this college thing and now I’m pretty much into it... It’s gone from seriously considering the military, to saying, ‘hey, go to college.’

Another—who actually got as far as entering the Army delayed entry program said he felt betrayed when he was given his occupational assignment.

I scored very high on the test...but they told me I’d be doing infantry—which is like digging six foot ditches and everything... I said, but would I be doing that for the next four years in the military? They said ‘yes.’ And I’m like I don’t want to do infantry for the next four years... Then he said he would find a good job for me. I could maintain a warehouse. I’m like, ‘well, okay that’s not good enough.’

He was disappointed by this experience though not surprised. His friend Jack—who had joined the Navy two years earlier—had been promised a mechanics job, but ended up in the kitchen.

## **Non-Joiners**

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Young men in the Non-Joiner propensity group are those who are least likely to enlist in the Armed Forces. The majority of these youth have given very little thought to the possibility of serving and have consistently reported they

would “probably not” or “definitely not” be serving on active duty in the next few years.

Non-Joiners are a demographically diverse group that includes young men from middle- and lower-income households whose families came to the continental United States from Mexico, Central and South America, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Cuba as many as five generations ago or as recently as three years ago. From our analysis of their in-depth interviews, three themes or patterns emerged that describe major reasons for their disinterest in—or rejection of—military service for themselves:

- Perceptions that military service is inconsistent with other career goals;
- Negative perceptions of the military or the military lifestyle; and
- Religious beliefs or loyalty to countries of origin that preclude service in the Armed Forces

The remainder of this chapter is organized around these three themes.

### **Military Service Is Inconsistent With Career Goals**

About one-quarter of all Non-Joiners in the study have career goals that either are inconsistent with military service or would be derailed or seriously delayed if they were to enlist. These young men—for whom military service is inconsistent with their goals—are all rational decision-makers. Whether they are still in high school or already attending college, they have put considerable thought into careers and have realistic plans for achieving them. In most cases, they have based their plans on long-held interests.

### **Military as Choice for Self**

Most of these young men do not see military service as helping them achieve their goals.

While some see benefit in military service, they think the costs are too great.

***Military service won't help achieve personal goals.*** The majority believe the military either would not provide them with the education and training they need to achieve their aspirations or not provide the sort of challenges they are seeking. In the words of one earnest young man who is studying radio production, for example:

I've already decided what I'm going to do as far as schooling and the career I want... I'm set I think... I really don't see myself in the military. I mean, what would I be doing in the military? The only thing that would probably come close [to the career I want] is some kind of technician fixing headphones for I guess the people who are on their radar command or something like that. I really don't know...what I would be doing in the military... I know there are a lot of jobs in the military... There are people who fly planes and stuff like that... There are mechanics. I just don't fit into any of those types of positions. There's really nothing I would want to do in the military and that's what it comes down to.

Another also saw no correlation between his chosen career—sports medicine—and military service:

[The military has] never been something that I've wanted to do... It's just that my whole life was grown around sports and it's what I did as a little kid... I wasn't out playing like cowboys and Indians or anything like that. I was playing basketball, football, or [some other sport]. That's what I wanted to do. Now I can't see myself doing anything else other than sports medicine.

***Costs of military service exceed benefits.*** Several of the young men in this cluster saw certain benefits of military service to their future careers. However, there were trade-offs they were not willing to make. For example, one young man—a talented and ambitious high school student—plans to study international law and also dreams that he may one day enter

national politics and be elected president of the United States. If he is to realize this dream, he believes he needs to have some first-hand knowledge of the military. "I don't feel it would be fair for me to have such aspirations," he said, "and yet not know about such a significant part of the nation... The military is a really huge [and important] institution." He has considered several paths that include military service, such as attending one of the academies or joining the Green Berets. Neither of these options, however, would satisfy his "thirst for knowledge." Further, he worries that the military perspective might narrow his views. As he explained:

I think mainly I'm a really starved person to learn as much as I can about everything... I really enjoy immersing myself in knowledge and just learning things... I've actually considered the possibility of the military several times... It's occurred to me, like maybe applying to a place like the Naval Academy in Annapolis or West Point or what have you, but...the ivy league schools I'm going to apply to seem to have a name and a reputation and their facilities attract me a lot more with respect to satisfying this thirst for knowledge... But also, [I worry] that [the military academies] just set you up to look at life in black and white...more than usual. The military is such an institution that is definitely drawn along certain lines. Someone coming out of the military or someone in the military would tend to look at life along certain lines more than being open-minded. The military would set you up to be not quite as open-minded.

The Green Berets also interest him. However, the time commitment is too great and would serve only to distract him from activities that are more directly related to his long-term goals in life:

I know one man who is a Green Beret and it sounded interesting... It's just pretty rigorous training and I enjoy challenges and I enjoy being able to depend upon myself as opposed to needing someone else... It's just one more experience... But it's something



that is just such an incredible commitment. Like if I started that, I'd have to spend a very long time in that and because I have these other aspirations...it would take so much time away from that, that it would be difficult for me to strive toward [my other goals].

More recently, he has thought about practicing law in the military as a civilian. This, he believes, would provide him with the opportunity to get an insider's perspective of the military and, at the same time, enable him to achieve his other goals.

Another young man was attracted—very briefly—to the military because “they offered [him] a lot of money.” Further consideration, however, led him to conclude that the costs of joining far outweighed any benefits. As he explained:

I considered the military...when they offered me a lot of money... One guy called me... He said scholarships and whatever. He knew I had like a 1210 on the SAT and stuff and saw that I knew what I wanted to do in college and all that so he was telling me to think of the schooling and you can make this kind of money... Of course money does have an effect... But [I thought about it] and decided I wasn't interested... It's not money related... The military can't buy me and there's a lot of BS things that you have to do too... They don't want people to be unique so if one guy is over there being goofy, then they will punish everybody else and make him stand there... I was afraid of that... They try to hide it, but most people can figure out that the first objective in the military is to break your unique self and make you a team... You have to have your life run. You can't be yourself... [So I decided] I just want to go to college and get my degree. There's a lot of other things you have to consider... Not just the money.

### ***Military as Choice For Others***

While these young men do not see military service as helping them toward their goals, they generally have positive perceptions of the military and see benefits of military service for others that might serve. However, not all see military service as improving character, and their images of the military are not untarnished.

***Military service good for others.*** While these young men do not feel military service is consistent with their needs, they see a number of practical benefits for those who do join—e.g., opportunities to save money, since room and board are free; deep discounts on most consumer goods at PXs; free college tuition; and hands-on skills training. However, they generally believe the military is geared more toward people they know who lack direction and need discipline. In the words of one young man:

It's a good thing I feel if you...don't have anything going in life... Like there are some friends of mine who really don't do anything. They tried college. Dropped out. Took a year off...and they're still taking that year off. And it's like those kinds of people who aren't focused and can't grasp something and then pursue it, then if they go into the military that's all they can do. That's all they are allowed to do and eventually they get their future together and when they come out they are straight arrow people. I feel it's basically for those types of people. But basically I'm set with what I want to do so I don't need that extra kick in the rear.

Another said some friends who work with him at the Boys and Girls Club have decided to join. Although other co-workers think it's an “awful idea” because they could get killed, he thinks it's probably what they need. About one such friend he said: “He's the kind of person that likes to party more than anything... He has tried to go to college, but dropped out... He's unfocused. The military, will help him pay for his education and give him the maturity and focus he needs to succeed in life.”



### ***Effects of military service not always positive.***

Several of these young men observed that the military did not have positive effects on all their unfocused friends who enlisted. As one explained:

I figure if...you're a dropout, got into the drug scene...[then] go into the military...they do become better people... [But] I've also seen it the other way around too. They come back like complete jerks... Like bad asses or whatever and they just push people around... My friend Josh came back from the military and he was a real jerk with his girlfriend... He was telling people off...and that he knows how to kill people now and all this crap with the military... [Also] when I was growing up...every person's father who is older and hit their kids or whatever it's always like some [former] military person... I don't know what goes on in there, but it changes a lot of people. Makes them crazy.

He said these folks are bad for the military's public relations. "They've been trained to behave that way," he said. "That's another reason I didn't join the military."

***Military is a necessary institution, albeit an imperfect one.*** Most of these young men consider the military a necessary institution in our imperfect world. In the words of one: "It's a necessary institution... We can't go without the military until we live in utopia and we are far off from that." A few others also expressed concern that the military's policies and practices are out of step with changes in the larger society. As one young man explained:

It's got lots of ills that have to be dealt with. Lots of intolerant views and lots of outdated militant styles that it needs to deal with... There are certain things that are happening...like sexual harassment. Things like that shouldn't be happening... And at the lower ranks...there are needs that need to be addressed that aren't... That's my general impression of the military and mainly I've gotten them from the news

media and Hollywood... Those are my main sources of information on the military.

Compared to other Non-Joiners in this sample—as well as many of the Fence Sitters described in the previous section—the young men for whom military service is inconsistent with their goals articulated a broad understanding of the military. From their accounts, the news media and Hollywood are their primary sources of information. Most also have talked to adults who served—e.g., their own fathers or friends of their parents—though their conversations were not very extensive. A few had friends who have enlisted or plan to enlist. Only one had ever talked to a recruiter.

Overall, their images of the military are positive, though they also expressed some rather serious concerns. Nearly all said they are put-off by aspects of the military they have learned about through the news media and commercial films. Particularly strong images are loss of control over events that affect one's life and disregard for individuals. One young man said the hierarchical nature of the military might put him into the uncomfortable position of being ordered to do something that is not right. Another equated it to "having your [older brother] assigning crap to you" to do, so you're always focused on his wishes or needs—not your own.

### **Negative Perceptions of the Military or Military Life**

Disinterest among members of another large cluster of Non-Joiners is based largely on negative perceptions of the military or the military lifestyle. They are mostly rational decision-makers from working and lower class family backgrounds. The majority are pursuing—or plan to pursue—specific careers in fields like engineering, architecture, graphic design and marketing. Their major objections to military service are discussed more fully below. They include strong associations of the military with killing and death; perceptions of excessive discipline; beliefs that it is a calling for some, but not for them; and leaving the comfort of their families to live with strangers.

## ***It's All About Killing or Being Killed***

Some young men associate military service primarily with war and being put in positions where they must kill or be killed. These associations evoke strong emotions and override any advantages or benefits of military service they can list.

As one young man explained:

[When you join the military, you're] just basically learning to kill. I'm not going to say it's all that because you learn how to deal with radar and stuff, but weapons of war and things of that nature...you learn how to do that... [You] learn how to fight and things like that and I could care less about that. When the war goes on, you go out there to kill people you don't know. I don't feel like doing that. Going out there and just murdering somebody because you're ordered to. That person is human like me. I don't know him like that to do anything of that nature to him.

Another believes the primary aim of the military is to prepare its recruits for war and to train them to kill others:

When you're in the military you're trained to kill. I don't want to get to that point, you know. They shave your head. They train you to kill and they get your body all physical to do it... It's just the fact that you have to deal with death, you know... Once you join the military they start teaching you to use guns, grenades and all that stuff...that's meant to kill... If there is a war somewhere then they will send troops in there. You'd be forced to go there.

For yet another, "war is about 95 percent of [his] objection." He associates the military with guns and violence. The strength of his concern is illustrated by his fear of the draft:

[If they ever bring the draft back]...I don't know what I will do. I don't like guns. I don't like killing people. I don't like fighting. I don't like wars. I don't even like

boxing. It defeats the whole purpose. I just don't like hurting people. I really don't. I have a temper and everything, you know, but I'm not a violent person at all.

This same young man said he was panic-stricken when he received notice that he had to register with Selective Service:

When I turned 18 and they were sending me the papers to sign up in case of the draft or whatever, I swear to you they must have sent it to me like five times because I would always put it in the drawer. I didn't want to see it. Honestly, I'm being honest. Maybe it's wrong or whatever. I don't know if you're really going to go to jail or not, but at the end my mother was like, 'look, you'd better sign this because it says here you're going to be taken to jail.' So fine. I signed it and sent it in. I'm just praying to God that I turn 25 or I die or...something happens in case of that draft or whatever. I don't want to go.

***Questionable Motives.*** Several young men also questioned the motivation behind current military initiatives. One—who grew up in a rough borough of New York—thinks the military has a lot in common with street gangs. He is particularly critical of political leaders and military brass who—like gang leaders—make the decisions to place troops (or in the case of gangs, street soldiers) in harm's way without making any sacrifices themselves:

I'm not going to die for anybody but myself. That's like with people out here, these kids trying to be with these gangs—that's what they do. [They say], 'I'll take a bullet for my man.' Well, that man is not going to be there for you when you're down in the dumps and stuff like that... That's one thing that I learned when I was in high school... I went through my little problems. I was hardheaded when I first started. But I only had one friend who really stood by me through anything. These people in gangs are not going to do that. If somebody comes up there with a gun and tries to shoot at them, what are they going to do? [They're going

to] run and leave you there to die... I forget who actually declares war in the government—the Secretary of Defense...or Colin Powell—[but] they do that... As soon as they order something, they aren't going to be there with the front line. I'm not going to see Bill [Clinton] next to me talking about I'll cover you while you go there. When those guys come up there with me on the front line to die with me, I'll go. But I'm not going to go there and they're sitting on their asses watching reruns of something on TV, while I'm over there fighting for my country and stuff like that. I'm not going to do that.

***Distasteful character.*** Several in the “negative perceptions of the military” talked about the negative effects the military has had on some people they know. One, for example, has a lot of relatives who have served in the Army and Navy. Although they speak positively about their experiences, he thinks the military has changed them in ways that he finds unacceptable:

I have cousins [serving in the Armed Forces] and I have uncles in there and I don't want to be like them... I see the way they're turning out, you know... Like really strict. They're like all sharp and everything. I'm like no way. They always say, 'oh, it's great.' There's no use to talk to them... They're just like every other promoter.

He went on to say that his mother has told him directly that she does not want him to enlist:

I don't want to do that...[and] my parents don't want me going in to the military either... They were like they would just prefer me not to go. They're scared of a war and having to send me out like to battle. My parents aren't like, 'go join the military or go be a better person.' My mom told me she prefers me not to go... My dad never really says anything. I don't think my dad cares. A lot of my family members were in the Army and the Navy and all that stuff, so I guess he's used to that. But I don't want to be in that stuff.

Others in this cluster said they were afraid to join because they have seen people “come back all crazy and stuff.” Another opposes “innocent people being killed” and worries about the effects that bombs and other instruments of destruction have on the environment.

### ***Too Much Regimentation and Discipline***

Even if they were assured enlistment in a peacetime military, few in this cluster of Non-Joiners would volunteer. Most consider the military's regimentation and discipline excessive and are unwilling to surrender that much control over their lives to such an arbitrary or impersonal authority.

For several, the bottom line is that their personalities or temperaments are not well suited to the military lifestyle. Based on television and movies, one young man imagines that recruits are constantly yelled at and belittled by their commanding officers. “That's not me,” he said. “I'd just blow up.” A friend of his that enlisted told him it was so bad that he purposely jumped out of a moving vehicle just to get a medical discharge. Another's impressions of military life are not that much different. He is convinced that he would be court-martialed for much of his term of duty:

My view is I know I'm going to get court-martialed as soon as I get in there because I'm not going to have some guy screaming in my face and telling me I'm nothing when I know what I am. That's a part of me. I'm not too much on taking orders... Some people feel if they get screamed in their face, then they'll become more of a man. I don't feel that way... I'm not a rebel, but you know what I mean... When I feel something I'm going to do it... I treat everybody on the same level—even my parents. If I tell you something...it's straight. I'm against...that superiority stuff... Everybody stripped down from all their titles and stuff like that, they are human. So this 'yes sir' to this one man who eats, sleeps and all the same stuff I do,

he's supposed to be better than me because he has a different color on their uniform and stuff like that... I don't feel that.

Another believes strongly that the military curtails individual rights of expression and free will. He thinks that freedom of choice is what is so great about America:

It's not the hard work... It's just losing my freedom and my decisions... I think it's just not really something of your choice... If you enroll or whatever...then you have to go there and you have to obey like their total rules... You make the decision to go in, but once you're in, you can't decide that I want to wake up today and not do that. I disagree with that... I totally disagree with the Army thing... What's so great about this country [is]...you have that right...to do your own decisions.

Another young man from a working poor family is struggling to put himself through college. He is aware of the college tuition benefits the military offers, but thinks they come at a price that is too high to pay. His parents work in the kitchen at a local military base and he has seen how poorly they are treated. His parents also have told him how the soldiers there are "treated like animals by their superiors." There is no way that he would ever subject himself to that sort of treatment.

### ***The Military Is Not My Calling***

In addition to excessive regimentation and restrictions on their behavior, the young men in this Non-Joiner cluster believe strongly that the military may be a worthy and desirable destination for those who choose it, but not for them. This is true even for those who have had close contact with relatives or friends in the service who speak positively of their experiences in the military and the benefits they received. Andrew's two half-brothers who both served, for example, tried—unsuccessfully—to get him to at least think about the possibility of joining. "Nothing could ever change my mind," he said. Like those in the previous section and

many others in this cluster, he thinks the military is geared primarily to those who either are interested in pursuing a narrow band of careers—e.g., law enforcement, mechanics or aviation—or who leave school with no direction or goals:

It's kind of like...Job Corps. You learn different trades and stuff like that... What am I going to get out of that? What does that have to do with [music, marketing], or anything else that I would do? I'm not going to learn anything that has to do with my trade... It's good for somebody like say they get out of school and don't have the slightest idea what they are going to do... It does help for people like that, but in my case it doesn't. I'm not going to benefit anything from that... It's not my thing. I'm not jumping out of no airplane just for the rush of it... My rush is from doing something that is mine.

The majority of others in this cluster expressed similar views. Eric, for example, respects and admires "whoever does go through [the military] and protects us." However, he thinks some people are attracted to military service in the same way that he is attracted to the banking profession:

I think [military service] is like a calling. There's like a calling for doctors and a calling for cops, firemen, paramedics...or whatever the case may be. It's like something that you want to do. You're given that choice. It's not like someone is going to make you be a paramedic or make you be a doctor. That's the choice you have. The [military's] not my choice... That's not the calling that I have... Becoming a banker is something that I want to do for myself. Not for my mother. Not for my father. Nobody, just myself... Just to satisfy myself. It's something that I've always wanted to do.

His mother's best friend's son, who joined the service after high school, has reinforced his views.

## ***Leaving Family and Living with Strangers***

Another aspect of the military that many in the “negative images” cluster found unattractive is separation from family. As one young man put it:

Leaving people behind—your loved ones. That would be the hardest part [of the military]... In civilian jobs you wake up really early and you go to work, but you always know that you’re coming back home. When you’re in the military you have to go like four or six years and you only come back on holidays for like a week... I like to be comfortable and I like to go back to where I’m from—to my home. Yes, [in the military] a base is there, but that’s not my house.

Several mentioned particularly strong attachments to siblings—particularly the younger ones who look up to them and see them as examples. Eric, whose father is seriously ill, associates the military with “emotional suffering” because he would have to leave his mother. It was important for him to point out that he is not a “mommy’s boy.” “It’s just that my mom really needs my help right now and if I enlisted or whatever, I’d have to leave her.”

In addition, several said they found the prospect of joining the military and living with “a bunch of people you don’t know” unfathomable. “There’s no privacy [in the military],” said one. “There’s no escaping and going to think...[because] you’re in a room full of a lot of people sleeping in bunk beds. People just there and you don’t know where they’re from.”

## ***Conflicts with Religious Beliefs or Loyalty to Country of Origin***

Another cluster of Non-Joiners did not consider military service an option because it either conflicts with their religious beliefs or has potential to pit them against their countries of origin. The majority are rational decision-makers; only one was neither working nor in

school at the time of the in-depth interviews. Although most grew up in low income families, they plan to complete at least two years of post-secondary training. One—the son of an agricultural laborer—plans to return to Mexico to complete his technical training after high school.

## ***Religious Prohibition***

The largest numbers of conscientious objectors are Jehovah’s Witnesses. Their religion explicitly forbids association with the military. As one young man explains, “if I were to join the military, I would...disrespect what my religion is and I would disrespect God.” Another explained further: “I am a Jehovah’s Witness and Jehovah’s Witnesses don’t believe in taking arms against other countries...or taking other people’s lives.” Yet another said he would have to forsake his religious beliefs if he joined the military. “I live by the commandments in the Bible,” he said, “and one of those commandments is thou shalt not kill. [Military service] goes against every moral principle that I live for.” He does not understand why some of his friends have done just that. “It’s weird,” he said, “because you see all the benefits of being one of Jehovah’s Witnesses and then you wonder why they would go out and do exactly what they were taught not to do.”

More generally, their religion forbids them to participate in politics and secular government. As one youth explained, “we don’t associate with anything having to do with politics, government or anything that has to do with the military.” Another said “the only government...is God’s government”:

I appreciate the fact that the government is there to protect us... But I don’t particularly care to be involved in it. That’s because I’m not part of this world...in that way or form. I believe that the only government that can bring...the things that we all need...is God’s government. So, I trust in Him and I rely on Him and I hope that one day he’ll come and he’ll make some kind of clean-up job on this world.

## **Special Requirements**

Xavier, a Seventh Day Adventist from a poor family, actually talked to an Army recruiter because he was interested in the college tuition benefits. Although his religion allows for military service, a major concern for him was that he would be required to work on Saturdays, which is their day of worship:

I just explained to the Army recruiter that I'm a Seventh Day Adventist and I worship on Saturdays... He told me that wouldn't be an obstacle because they don't work on Saturdays, but something made me think about that and that was my major concern.

## **Divided Loyalty**

In addition to his main concern about worshipping on Saturdays, Xavier expressed two other barriers. The first was that he might be put into a position of taking arms against Mexico where he lived for more than 15 years and still has strong attachments. In his words:

Even though I'm a resident [of the United States], I'm still a Mexican so that just made me think that if some time something would happen between Mexico and the United States...like a war, you know, I know that Mexico would lose big time and I would feel bad fighting against my own country.

Second, since he was not yet a resident of the United States when he turned 16, he was required to return to Mexico to register for the draft and participate in the lottery.<sup>2</sup> Relieved that he drew a black ball, which exempted him from military service there, he wondered how in good conscious he could ever consider service in the military of another country. "If I didn't want to [enlist] in Mexico," he reasoned, "why would I want to do it [in the United States]?"

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<sup>2</sup> As he explained it, military service in Mexico is determined by lottery. Those who draw a black ball are granted proof of military service without ever having to enlist. Those who draw a white ball are immediately conscripted for a period of one year.

## **Summary**

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This chapter presented findings on propensity for military service among Hispanic youth. Particular attention was given to the youth's images of the military and how likely they are to enlist in the next couple of years. Three major propensity groupings emerged from analyses of the youth's responses to questions on the YATS survey and the in-depth interviews—Fence-Sitters, Shifters and Non-Joiners. Unlike previous studies, none of the young men in this sample expressed firm intentions of joining.

Fence-Sitters are those youth who mentioned the military as a possible option for themselves, but were uncertain about whether they would pursue it or not. Among these youth, two distinct clusters emerged, based on whether their interest in the military was motivated more by benefits that were tangible or intangible.

The largest cluster of Fence-Sitters is composed of youth that are attracted mainly to the intangible benefits of military service—e.g., discipline, maturation, and other opportunities for self-improvement. The majority of these youth grew up in working or lower class families and ranged in age from 16-21. Several reported learning problems. Nearly all are in nascent stages of career development. For the most part, the older youth in this cluster remain on the fence because they also are drawn to possibilities in the civilian sector. The younger youth have even hazier visions of the future. Their interests are generally less clear and the military is but one of several disparate career paths under consideration.

In addition to these intangible benefits, several also associated military service with tangible benefits, such as getting paid for learning new job skills, as well as opportunities to save money and to see the world. These tangible benefits, however, did not figure prominently in their thinking about enlistment.

Few of these young men had much concrete information about the military. Most of what they know has come from television and movies.

Several have relatives or friends who have served in the military here or in their countries of origin. However, they have not had much contact with these potential sources of influence. About one-half have had some contact with recruiters, though none were satisfied with the quality or depth of information they received. Major barriers to enlistment include perceptions of rough treatment in the military, especially during the first six months or so of service; and concerns about living far apart from their families.

The remaining Fence-Sitters are drawn to the college tuition benefits associated with military service. The majority grew up in lower middle and working class households and believe strongly that college is the key to success. Given their families' limited resources, they see the military as one sure way of gaining access to the resources they need to pursue it. Their parents also view the military as a viable path for social mobility.

The majority of these youth who are attracted to the tangible benefits of military service are mostly rational decision-makers, who are still in high school. As such, they are in the throes of exploring various alternatives to the military. Also, any decisions they make will be based on information they have gathered and assessed as a part of the decision-making process. Most have access to adults—e.g., teachers at school or corporate mentors—who make the time and have the resources to guide them. A few have talked to recruiters, but clearly have not established the sort of meaningful relationships they have developed with these other adults. As a result, they have much more information about colleges and civilian careers than they have about the military. Other barriers to enlistment include concerns about the trustworthiness of military recruiters and fears of hazing and other forms of rough treatment in the military.

Shifters are youth who thought about joining the military at one time, but have since decided against it. The majority of these youth were in a diffuse stage of career decision-making when they were considering enlistment. For some, uncertainty about careers or career paths was the

primary factor that motivated their initial interest. Others were interested in specialized military training—usually in the field of aviation—which was based more on boyhood fantasies than realistic assessments of their qualifications. Although nearly all the Shifters went on to prepare for careers in the civilian sector, none said they decided against the military to pursue alternative plans. Rather, the reasons they gave for not enlisting centered on concerns over the treatment of soldiers and unsatisfactory or unsatisfying job assignments.

Non-Joiners are those who are least likely to enlist in the Armed Forces. The majority of these youth have given very little thought to the possibility of serving and have consistently reported that they would “probably not” or “definitely not” be serving on active duty in the next few years.

Non-Joiners are a demographically diverse group that includes young men from middle and lower income households, whose families have lived in the United States from three years to five or more generations. Major reasons for their disinterest in, or rejection of, military service for themselves include perceptions that military service is inconsistent with other career goals, negative perceptions of the military or the military lifestyle, and religious beliefs or loyalty to countries of origin.

While Non-Joiners do not think military service is consistent with their needs, they consider it a necessary institution in an imperfect world. Also, they see a number of practical benefits for those who do join—e.g., opportunities to save money, free college tuition, and hands-on skill development. They generally believe the military is geared more toward people who, unlike them, lack goals and need direction.



## 4. IMPLICATIONS FOR RECRUITMENT

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This report presented findings from an in-depth study of career decision-making and propensity for military service among 40 male Hispanic youth, aged 16-21. To determine the effects of country of origin, we purposively sampled youth whose families came to the continental United States from Puerto Rico, Mexico, Central and South America, and other Latin countries. Some of the youth's families have been here for several generations, others several years. Although the sample size is small, it yielded a wide range of personal circumstances and perspectives that contribute to an understanding of this important segment of the recruitment market.

This is the third in a series of in-depth studies of youth propensity. The first two studies focused on young men and young women, respectively, and included Black, Hispanic and White youth. The major findings from this study that focused exclusively on Hispanic youth are remarkably similar to those from the two earlier studies.

As in earlier studies, we found striking differences among youth in terms of their approaches to career decision-making and perspectives on military service. Socioeconomic status is strongly associated with many of these differences. Differences associated with number of generations or years in the United States also appear to be correlated with socioeconomic status.

With respect to approaches to career decision-making and propensity for military service, differences among Hispanic youth are greater than differences between Hispanic youth and the White and Black youth in previous studies. Whether a young man is a rational or diffuse decision-maker, whether he has or needs college funding, or whether he thinks the structure and discipline of the military would facilitate or stifle his growth and development, have much greater effects on his interest in military service than ethnicity.

The following are important implications of these and other findings for recruitment of youth to the Armed Forces:

- **Marketing strategies that appeal to youth on the basis of their overall approach to thinking about, and planning for, the future will be more effective than those based on their ethnicity.**

Hispanic youth are a diverse group—in terms of their overall approaches to the future and assessments of personal needs or preferences that drive their interest or disinterest in military service. As was shown in Chapter 2, some youth approach career planning systematically or rationally; others are diffuse decision-makers. Chapter 3 identified striking differences among youth in aspects of military service that attract them. As was shown, on the basis of personal needs or preferences, some are interested primarily in the intangible benefits of military service; others are primarily interested in the tangible benefits.

These differences in decision-making styles and personal needs or preferences have significant implications for recruitment strategies—specifically, the sorts of messages or approaches that might engage each of these segments. Rational decision-makers have reasonably clear ideas of their career interests and career identities. They make decisions based on information they have gathered from diverse sources, usually over a period of two or more years. When they make decisions, then, they know which skills and credentials they will need to achieve their goals and they have fairly realistic pictures of what their day-to-day lives will be like once they enter jobs in their selected fields.

For rational decision-makers, enlistment in the military entails too many leaps of faith. In their view, the Services do not provide sufficient information to make rational or purposive decisions. They want up-front information



about a variety of jobs, civilian applications of particular skills and the process of job selection or assignment, as well as information about day-to-day life in the military. As one young man explained: “I know what I’ve seen on TV and from Hollywood, but...that’s not enough for me to get a good picture of what the military is all about... If the military really wants people, they’re going to have to be a little more proactive—instead of giving commercials, actually give information.”

Whereas information is key to rational decision-makers, relationships and messages about “finding oneself” or “finding one’s calling” appeal to diffuse decision-makers. These young men either are passively receptive to or actively looking for help in establishing direction in their lives. In many instances, the career paths they follow grow out of relationships with caring adults who spend time with them and expose them to possible options. Recruiters might fill this role, but must be persistent and reliable.

Recruitment strategies or messages that work best for rational decision-makers will be less than optimal for diffuse decision-makers. Similarly, different strategies or messages will work for youth on the basis of personal needs or preferences that drive their interest in military service. Multiple strategies or messages that target these different segments of the population are needed. Tangible benefits like college funding will appeal strongly to rational, college-bound youth that have insufficient resources, but not to those whose parents are willing and able to pay for college or who are not genuinely interested in college. Youth recognize that some will benefit from the maturing effects of military discipline, but also believe that not everyone needs this experience.

Differences in personal needs and decision-making style appear to be related to socioeconomic status and time spent in the continental United States. However, we did not find differences in youth on the basis of their countries of origin (i.e., Mexico, Puerto Rico, Central or South America, and other Latin countries). Moreover, the needs and decision-making styles we found among Hispanic youth

are similar to those found in earlier studies among Black and White youth. This is not to suggest that there are not important differences between Hispanic youth and others. Rather, on the basis of characteristics that affect interest in military service, we found none that are uniquely Hispanic.

- **Great care should be taken in using marketing strategies that target young men on the basis of their ethnicity or countries of origin. Such strategies may be considered offensive and be counterproductive.**

The young men in this study can all trace their family origins to Puerto Rico and Mexico, Central or South America or other Latin countries. More than one-half were born in the continental United States. Only a few sampled youth had any insight into the reasons their families left their homelands to come to the United States and less than one-half were fluent in Spanish.

The majority of these youth view the United States as a multicultural society and consider themselves American. As such, they want to be treated like other Americans. Attempts to single them out on the basis of ascribed characteristics—like ethnicity—are shunned. As one explained: “We’re in the land of the free and mixed cultures... [So when] the military calls and it’s like, ‘hey, I’m Jose,’ it doesn’t work... If you’re born in America, don’t try that stuff... It’s a segregation type of thing... If every time you try to do something you get stuck with a Spanish guy because you’re Spanish...it’s offensive.”

- **Skills training is a powerful incentive for some youth, but the Services are missing recruiting opportunities. More could be done to make connections between youth’s career interests or aspirations and job assignments in the military.**

Many youth—particularly rational decision-makers—believe that opportunities for jobs and skills in the military are limited to what they call “grunt work.” Those interested in fields like

electronics, information technology and communications believe they would have to forsake these aspirations if they joined the military.

A few of these young men talked to recruiters about their occupational interests. However, they said the recruiters did not appear to be listening or did not appear to be interested. One bright young man who served four years in JROTC, for example, entered the Army's delayed entry program during the summer before his senior year in high school. When he learned that he had been assigned to the infantry, he backed out of his commitment. "I scored very high on the test," he said. "I thought I'd be working at least close to computers, but they told me infantry—which is like digging ditches... I'll go in the military to get the college and get the expertise, but not infantry...for the whole time. I mean, once I leave the military, I may have infantry training, but that would do me no good out here."<sup>3</sup> In the end, he decided to go to college after high school and forego military service altogether.

After completing a two-year program in radiology, another youth talked to a recruiter about opportunities in the military. When he was told the military did not have a need for health care professionals, he too decided to continue his education at a four-year university and find meaningful work in the civilian sector.

- **Military recruitment messages are not viewed as credible. Youth point to marketing strategies that focus exclusively on the benefits of service as one basis for diminished credibility.**

Youth are critical of media and advertisements that provide incomplete information or false impressions. In their view, the military does this

in a number of ways. One way is to imply that the military offers technical training and other benefits when the majority of enlistees get assigned to do unskilled labor or perform jobs that have no known civilian applications. Another way the military misleads is through advertising that focuses almost exclusively on what the military does for the individual with little or no attention given to what the enlistee does to earn them. "Just be realistic," said one young man. "Tell them exactly what is the pros and cons. What they will really do. Give a concrete idea of what their life will be. What responsibilities they have... Give them a really good idea, not just the good things... Tell them what they have to do in order to get that \$30,000 for college... No gimmicks... Just tell the facts...and then tell them, 'for this and to thank you, we'll also pay for your school.' Then it sounds more realistic."

- **For many youth, negative images of the military or life in the military outweigh positive ones. These negative images are major barriers to enlistment.**

Many youth expressed aversion to the military because of the way individuals are treated. Pervasive negative images of the military include an over-regimented lifestyle, being constantly and unnecessarily yelled at, and being subjected to the arbitrary whims of persons in authority. Several understood that these practices are meant to "break the will" of individuals so they will be able to work as a team, but thought the same ends could be achieved without berating or belittling people. Citing instances of hazing, sexual abuse and discrimination, several also mentioned concerns that the military cannot be trusted to protect its own members.

These images deter many youth from seeking additional information about military service or from ever joining. Recognizing that strict discipline is necessary in the military and attractive to some recruits, the Services should evaluate their practices, work to eliminate those that are excessive or abusive, and promote practices and perceptions of discipline that build character.

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<sup>3</sup> One of our reviewers, 1st Lt. Cardenas of the Marine Corps, pointed out that infantrymen, from the lowest levels up, are required to be resourceful and flexible, able to react quickly to changing circumstances. The anecdote shows two communications failures: the military had not learned the young man's needs, and they had not communicated an appreciation of the intellectual demands required of the infantry or any other military occupation specialty.

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**APPENDIX A**

**STUDY METHODOLOGY**

## **Study Methodology**

This study was designed to gain a more in-depth understanding of propensity for military service among Hispanic youth than is possible from the larger YATS survey. The survey, which is designed to measure trends in attitudes, requires highly structured questions that do not vary from one respondent to another or from one year to the next. This means that interviewers do not have the latitude to probe for additional information that might explain the meaning of particular responses. The purpose of these follow-up interviews, then, was to probe for this additional information and explain the meaning of responses.

In planning the study, we identified two broad areas of investigation:

- The context and process of young Hispanic men's career decisions, and
- The specific consideration of military enlistment as a career choice.

The study was planned as a follow-up to the 1997 YATS, with a special focus on Hispanic males from various national backgrounds—i.e., Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican and Central/South American. The 1997 YATS provided a sample of 10,163 young men and women for which we already had a great deal of relevant information. We focused our sample selection to male YATS respondents who identified themselves as Hispanic and lived in areas of the United States where there are concentrated populations of Hispanics. We included Hispanic respondents with characteristics of the primary recruiting market: 17-21 year-olds who were either high school seniors or high school graduates. To increase the size of our sampling pool, it was necessary to add 16 year old high school sophomores and juniors. From this pool, we selected individuals with diverse levels of current and past interest in military service and demographic characteristics. Throughout data collection, we monitored the sample to ensure a mix of youth on the basis of age, education status and attainment, and employment status.

Conducting the interviews over the telephone rather than in-person gave us greater flexibility in sample selection. Interviewing such a diverse sample of YATS respondents in person, given their geographic dispersion, would have been prohibitively expensive. Similar in-depth telephone interviews with other samples of youth we conducted for DMDC have demonstrated the efficacy of this mode of data collection.

The following sections describe the study methodology:

- Sample selection,
- Development of the interview protocol,
- Interviewer training,
- Contact procedures,
- Data collection,
- Final disposition of sampled cases, and
- Data analysis.

### **Sample Selection**

An important goal of this study was to explore similarities and differences in career decision-making or military propensity among young Hispanic men of diverse nationalities. To increase the probability that we would interview significant numbers of youth from four nationality groups, we segmented the sample

pool into likely nationality groups prior to sample selection. This was done by matching the respondent's zip code to 1990 Census data. The 1990 Census data provides a count of residents by country of origin for each zip code. For sampling purposes, we created a "likely nationality group" for each male Hispanic respondent from the three largest Hispanic nationality groups in his zip code.

A second important characteristic in this study was military propensity. We selected male Hispanic YATS respondents who reflected the full range of interest in military service within the "prime military recruiting market," the segment of the youth population that provides most military recruits. In addition to these young men most likely to join the military, we also wanted to include individuals unlikely to join, individuals who had been interested in military service in the past, but whose likelihood of serving had waned, and individuals who were uncertain about joining the military.

Exhibit A (at the end of this appendix) is a flow chart tracing the sample from the 1997 YATS respondent database to the in-depth interview respondents. The first several steps applied the eligibility criteria for the 1997 in-depth sample, including sex, race/ethnicity, age, and propensity category. Of the 10,163 1997 YATS respondents, 426 met the study criteria: 6,050 were males, 4,654 of whom were 16-21 year-olds. Of this subset, 542 were Hispanic and 426 of them met the educational criteria (high school students, graduates or post-secondary students).

Once the sampling pool was defined, members were further classified into propensity groupings. Past research (Stone, Turner, & Wiggins, 1993; Orvis, Gahart, & Ludwig, 1992) shows that likelihood of enlistment is indicated by responses to questions about "unaided" and "aided" propensity questions. The following questions from YATS were used to classify respondents according to propensity for military service:

**Q438.** *Now, let's talk about your plans for the next few years. What do you think you might be doing?*

1. Going to school
2. Working
3. Doing nothing
4. Joining the military/service
5. Undecided
6. Staying at home
7. Other

Because Q438 is asked before the interviewer introduces the topic of military service, respondents saying they might join the military are said to have provided an "unaided"<sup>4</sup> mention of military service. Enlistment likelihood is also indicated by the following questions:

**Q503.** *Now, I'd like to ask you how likely it is that you will be serving in the military in the next few years. Would you say...*

1. Definitely
2. Probably
3. Probably not
4. Definitely not

**Q510 - Q513.**

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<sup>4</sup> This question about future plans is asked prior to any questions about military service. Those who mention military service are said to have provided an "unaided" mention.

*How likely is it that you will be serving on Active duty in the [Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force]? Would you say...*

1. Definitely
2. Probably
3. Probably not
4. Definitely not

Q510 - Q513 are asked about each of the Services, in turn. We used the following question to determine past interest in military service:

**Q525.** *Before we talked today, had you ever considered the possibility of joining the military? Would you say...*

1. You never thought about it
2. You gave it some consideration
3. You gave it serious consideration

Responses to these propensity-related questions were used to classify the Hispanic male sample into four propensity groups. The groups were:

**“Joiners”** are those most likely to join the military. They provided an “unaided” mention of military service among their future plans, said they would “definitely” or “probably” be on active duty in at least one of the Services, and said that they had seriously considered military service prior to the YATS interview.

**“Non-Joiners”** are those least likely to join the military. They did not provide an “unaided” mention of military service among their plans, said they had never considered joining, and consistently said they would “probably not” or “definitely not” be on active duty in the military or any of the Services.

**“Shifters”** are those who have changed their minds about military service. They said they had seriously considered military service in the past, but did not provide an “unaided” mention of military service, and consistently said they would “probably not” or “definitely not” be on active duty in the military or any of the Services.

**“Fence-Sitters”** appear to be ambiguous. They did not provide an “unaided” mention of military service among their future plans, but said they had given military service “some” consideration in the past. They include respondents who said they will “probably” or “probably not” be on active duty, but exclude those who consistently responded that they “probably will not” or “definitely will not” serve.

This categorization produced too few sample members to meet study requirements for respondents in the Hispanic nationality groups. To increase the size of the sample pool, we broadened the definitions of the propensity groups beyond the definitions used in the previous studies. Table A1 shows more specific definitions of these groups. The original specifications have been labeled “old” and the additional specifications have been labeled “new.” YATS respondents were included in a particular propensity group if they met either the old or new specifications.

<b>Table A1. Definition of Propensity Groups</b>	
<b>Propensity Group</b>	<b>Inclusion Rule</b>
“Old” Joiners “New” Joiners	Q525=3 & V438JOIN=1 & CPYATS82=1 or 2 Q525 = 2 & V438JOIN = 1 & CPYATS82 = 1 & Q503 = 1 <b>OR</b> Q525 = 2 & V438JOIN = 1 & CPYATS82 = 1 & Q503 = 2 <b>OR</b> Q525 = 2 & V438JOIN = 1 & CPYATS82 = 2 & Q503 = 2 <b>OR</b> Q525 = 3 & V438JOIN = 1 & CPYATS82 = 4 & Q503 = 1 <b>OR</b> Q525 = 3 & V438JOIN = 2 & CPYATS82 = 1 & Q503 = 2 <b>OR</b> Q525 = 3 & V438JOIN = 2 & CPYATS82 = 1 & Q503 = 3
“Old” Non-Joiners “New” Non-Joiners	Q525=1 & V438JOIN=2 & Q503=3 & CPYATS82=4 <b>OR</b> Q525=1 & V438JOIN=2 & Q503=4 & CPYATS82=3 or 4 Q525 = Missing & V438JOIN=2 & Q503=4 & CPYATS82=3
“Old” Shifters “New” Shifters	Q525=3 & V438JOIN=2 & Q503=3 & CPYATS82=4 <b>OR</b> Q525=3 & V438JOIN=2 & Q503=4 & CPYATS82=3 or 4 Q525 = 2 & V438JOIN = 2 & CPYATS82 = 3 & Q503 = 3 <b>OR</b> Q525 = 2 & V438JOIN = 2 & CPYATS82 = 3 & Q503 = 4 <b>OR</b> Q525 = 2 & V438JOIN = 2 & CPYATS82 = 4 & Q503 = 3 <b>OR</b> Q525 = 2 & V438JOIN = 2 & CPYATS82 = 4 & Q503 = 4 <b>OR</b> Q525 = 3 & V438JOIN = 2 & CPYATS82 = 1 & Q503 = 4
“Old” Fence-Sitters “New” Fence-Sitters	Q525=2 & V438JOIN=2 & Q503=2 OR 3 & CPYATS82=1 or 2 <b>OR</b> Q525=2 & V438JOIN=2 & Q503=1 OR 2 & CPYATS82=2 or 3 All cases not identified as Joiner, Non-Joiner or Shifter were categorized as Fence-Sitter
<p><b>V438JOIN</b> equals 1 if the respondent mentioned military service in Q438; it equals 2 if the respondent did not mention military service.</p> <p><b>CPYATS82</b> is the minimum value of responses to questions <b>Q510</b> through <b>Q513</b>. Thus, if a respondent said she would “probably” join the Marine Corps but “probably not” join the Army, Navy, or Air Force, <b>CPYATS82</b> would equal 2.</p>	

Table A2 shows the 421 sample members categorized by likely nationality group and propensity group. Five of the sample cases had a missing nationality group and were excluded from the sample at this point.



<b>Table A2. Sample for In-Depth Interviews</b>									
<b>Nationality Group</b>	<b>Propensity Group</b>								<b>Total</b>
	Old Joiners	New Joiners	Old Non-Joiners	New Non-Joiners	Old Shifters	New Shifters	Old Fence-Sitters	New Fence-Sitters	
Mexican	20	14	45	0	16	111	53	64	323
Cuban	0	2	2	1	3	9	4	3	24
Puerto Rican	3	4	7	0	3	17	8	6	48
Central/South American	3	2	2	0	1	8	4	6	26
<b>Total</b>	26	22	56	1	23	145	69	79	<b>421</b>

NOTE: Central/South American nationality group also includes members with the Census country of origin “other Hispanic.”

The next stage of sampling was selection of the sample members for interviewing. The goal of sample selection was not to represent the YATS male Hispanic respondent population, but to yield sufficient numbers of respondents for analysis by important characteristics, such as nationality group and propensity category. Thus, the sampling was not proportional to these characteristics in the YATS population.

We planned to complete a minimum of 10 cases per nationality group; thus the target sample was 10 Mexican youth, 10 Cuban youth, 10 Puerto Rican youth and 10 Central or South American youth. In order to reach this goal, we planned to select 50 percent more cases than our target completes for the Wave 1 sample. This meant that we would select 15 cases per nationality group for a total of 60 cases, with a mix of propensity groups. However, there were only 6 cases available from likely Central or South American countries. Table A3 shows the results of the Wave 1 sample selection.

<b>Table A3. Wave 1 Sample Selection</b>					
<b>Nationality Group</b>	<b>Propensity Group</b>				<b>Total</b>
	Joiners	Non-Joiners	Shifters	Fence-Sitters	
Mexican	4	4	3	4	15
Cuban	2	2	4	7	15
Puerto Rican	3	3	5	4	15
Central/South American	0	1	1	4	6
<b>Total</b>	9	10	13	19	51

The Wave 1 sample included 51 cases: 15 likely Mexicans, 15 likely Cubans, 15 likely Puerto Ricans and 6 likely Central/South Americans. We selected a range of cases within nationality group for each of the propensity categories based on their availability.

Sample members were assigned to interviewers. Initially, all sample members were given equal priority in scheduling interviews. However, as interviews were completed, we monitored the distribution of respondent characteristics with respect to age, educational status (high school sophomore or junior; high school senior; high school graduate; post-secondary student), work status (employed; unemployed, but looking for work; unemployed, but not looking for work), and state of residence. If we were completing interviews with many individuals in one category at the expense of another, we selected subsequent respondents from underrepresented categories. This sample management represented a transition to

purposive sampling from the previous stratified random sampling. Purposive sampling preserved the intra-cell diversity of cases that random sampling might not have yielded, given the size of the sample, and ensured the breadth of data required for analysis purposes.

For each sample member, a Respondent Profile Form (Appendix B) was produced to summarize responses to certain YATS interview questions. Among these were personal characteristics (age, date of birth, state of residence, educational status, work status, military experience of family members) and responses to questions about military propensity and career plans (intention to join each of the military Services, college or work plans).

## Development of the Interview Protocol

Initial design efforts focused on identification of research questions that would guide the development of both the interview protocol and sample design. Although our primary interest was in decisions to enter (or not enter) military service, we reasoned that these decisions are best understood in the broader context of career decision-making. Five broad research questions were established for this study:

1. **Post-high school career decisions:** In late adolescence, young people may be decided upon their careers, or have uncertain or unformed ideas about the direction of future careers. Referring to these states as a continuum of “career maturity,” how does the career maturity of young Hispanic men influence their attitudes toward the military and interest in enlistment?
2. **Sources of influence on post-high school career decisions:** Who and what influence youth’s decisions (e.g., parents, relatives, or acquaintances in the military; news and current events)? What is the nature of the influence (e.g., information, guidance, modeling), and how does it affect youth’s perceptions of the military?
3. **Propensity and changes in propensity:** What do young Hispanic men mean by the responses they provide to propensity questions in the YATS questionnaire? Similarly, what do they mean by the reasons given for subsequent changes in propensity?
4. **Images of the military and the military lifestyle:** What images do young Hispanic men have of military service? What is the meaning and evaluation of the information young Hispanic men gain about the military from various sources? How do young Hispanic men’s values, career ambitions, and perceptions of the military way of life affect their evaluation of the military as a career choice?
5. **Family background:** What family and other background characteristics influence young Hispanic men’s future plans and views of the military?

Using the research questions as a guide, we designed a 45-minute structured interview protocol for administration by telephone (see Appendix C for a copy of the protocol and Appendix D for the question-by-question guide). The aim of the protocol was to provide a format through which the respondent could reflect on, explore, and describe the story of his career decision-making process with emphasis on how this related to propensity toward the military. As with many important life events, individuals do not think about the thought process they experience as events transpire. Thus, the protocol offered several different entrees to the interview topics so that the youth could respond to points that were most salient to his situation. Some repetition was built into the interview to allow the respondent to return to important points upon reflection or as details were recalled. The protocol was general in content, making it

adaptable to different types of careers, different points in the young men's career decision-making process, and the abilities of respondents to articulate these.

The protocol included sections representing major areas of inquiry, such as influencers on the career-decision process and interest in the military. Topics were organized to follow a natural flow of conversation by introducing more general areas of career choice first, such as current career plans, followed by more specific topics like military propensity. However, if the respondent introduced topics in a different order, the interviewer followed the respondent's lead. Within sections, the same questions were posed to each respondent. Probes were used liberally to encourage the respondent to expand on his response or to focus the discussion on specific items of interest.

The protocol was reviewed and pretested to ensure that (a) we were covering the intended content, (b) the language was clear and easy to understand, and (c) the interview had a natural flow.

## **Interviewer Training**

Four senior and middle-level female researchers conducted the interviews. Prior to data collection each interviewer was provided:

- An overview of the project and its rationale;
- A review of qualitative data collection techniques and how they differ from standard survey interviewing;
- An overview of the structure and rationale of the protocol, as well as a question-by-question review;
- Guidance on smooth handling of flow and question order; and
- A set of questions we expected respondents and their parents might ask about the project, along with appropriate answers.

Each interviewer conducted a face-to-face practice interview with a surrogate respondent, which was audio-taped. The study's senior scientist reviewed the tapes and provided feedback on technique, including interview flow and probing, and the specific intent of questions. After several interviews were completed, the senior scientist also provided additional coaching on qualitative methods. The senior scientist continued to monitor transcripts for quality and consistency throughout the data collection phase of the study.

## **Contact Procedures**

Sample members were initially contacted by personnel from Westat's Telephone Research Center (TRC). The purpose of the in-depth interviews—i.e., to talk with YATS respondents about their military and career plans in more detail—was explained. Selected respondents were told the interviews took, on average, 45 minutes to complete and that we would send them \$15 as a token of our appreciation. To avoid initial refusals, interviewers explained the importance of the interview and, if the respondent was busy or could not make an immediate interview appointment, offered to call back at another time. However, if the interviewer believed that a refusal to participate was firm and the respondent would not agree to participate at a later date, she thanked the respondent and did not attempt to contact him again. The TRC interviewers set a specific date and time for the interview with each respondent. For

respondents under age 18, we assumed permission if a parent or other adult did not refuse the respondent's participation. The TRC interviewers also called the sample members the day before their appointments as a reminder. In scheduling, a minimum of 1 hour was left free between interviews to provide time for the interviewers to summarize the interview.

A call record was kept for each sample member (see Appendix E). The call record listed all call attempts and dispositions until the interview was completed or the case was finalized.

Prior to any telephone contact, specific guidelines were established that defined the level of effort we would use in our efforts to contact individuals in our sampling pool:

- **Call attempts.** A maximum of seven attempts were made to reach anyone at the given telephone number. The seven attempts were placed over different time slices: two daytime, three evening, and two weekend (one Saturday and one Sunday). Unsuccessful call attempts were coded as either "ring, no answer;" answering machine; or busy signal. (A message about the study was left on answering machines, but a return call was not requested.)
- **Household contacts.** After it was determined that the telephone number was a working number and someone in the household verified that the respondent was at that location, the maximum number of contacts attempted to reach the respondent was set at five.
- **Broken appointments.** The maximum number of appointments made and broken by the sampled respondent was set at three.

If the maximum number of calls was reached in any category, the case was closed.

## Data Collection

Data collection began on June 29, 1998, and was completed on August 20, 1998. Interviews were conducted at times that were convenient to respondents. All interviews with youth were conducted in English and, with their permission, tape-recorded. Immediately following each interview, summaries were completed (see Appendix F).

The number of completed interviews by nationality and propensity groups are shown in Table A4. The nationality group represents the actual background of the respondent.

<b>Table A4. Completed Interviews by Nationality and Propensity Groups</b>					
<b>Nationality Group</b>	<b>Propensity Group</b>				<b>Total</b>
	Joiners	Non-Joiners	Shifters	Fence-Sitters	
Mexican	1	5	1	5	12
Cuban	0	0	2	0	2
Puerto Rican	1	2	4	4	11
Central/South American	2	1	7	5	15
<b>Total</b>	4	8	14	14	<b>40</b>

By way of a footnote, it may be of interest for the reader to examine the relationship between likely nationality group and actual nationality group. That table is presented below.

<b>Table A5. Actual Nationality Group by “Likely Nationality Group” of Respondents</b>							
<b>Actual Nationality Group</b>	<b>Likely Nationality Group</b>						<b>Total</b>
	Mexican	Cuban	Puerto Rican	Dominican	Colombian	“Other” South American	
Mexican	11	1	0	0	0	0	12
Cuban	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Puerto Rican	0	2	8	1	0	0	11
Central/South Americans	0	7	6	0	1	1	15
<b>Total</b>	11	12	14	1	1	1	<b>40</b>

In several cases, the respondent’s mother and father belonged to different nationality groups. Where this occurred, we placed the respondent in the nationality group he identified as primary in the in-depth interview.

## Final Disposition of Sampled Cases

The final disposition of the sampled cases is shown in Table A6.

Table A6. Final Disposition of Sampled Cases by Likely Nationality Group and Propensity Group																	
Result	Likely Nationality & Propensity Groups*															Total	
	Mexican				Cuban				Puerto Rican				Central/South Americans				
	J	NJ	S	FS	J	NJ	S	FS	J	NJ	S	FS	J	NJ	S		FS
Completes	1	4	1	5	0	2	8	2	3	2	5	4	0	0	0	3	40
Refusals	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	3	2	0	0	0	1	12
Not available in field period	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	3	0	0	1	0	1	8
Out of scope	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	6
Broken appts.	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	6
Non-locatable	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	8
Non-working	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	9
Cases converted from interim to complete at study end	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Total	7	5	5	8	2	3	12	7	6	7	13	10	0	1	1	5	92
*J Joiners NJ Non-Joiners S Shifters FS Fence-Sitters																	

All 92 cases were contacted. Of the 46 cases who agreed to be interviewed (completed cases plus broken appointments), 40 completed interviews. At the end of the study, three cases were converted from interim status (still to be or already scheduled for interviews) to final status. The overall refusal rate was approximately 13 percent (12 cases). The overall rate of non-locatable or non-working numbers was approximately 18 percent (17 cases). Six cases were out of scope for various reasons—e.g., not Hispanic, not within the age range, or wrong sex (1 case). Eight youth were not available during the field period; the majority of these youth were traveling.

## **Data Analysis**

This study used two sources of information in analysis: semi-structured in-depth interviews with youth and their responses to selected items on the YATS survey. Of these sources, systematic analysis of the in-depth interviews with youth posed the greatest challenge and investment of time. The volume of the transcriptions the interviews generated—more than 1,000 pages of text—required a system for organizing and sorting the data for individual cases, identifying relationships and patterns in the data across cases and writing the final report. Toward these ends, we followed a plan for processing and analyzing these data. A summary of the key steps in our data management and analysis approach follows.

### ***Review and Preliminary Coding of Data***

Once an in-depth interview was completed and transcribed, members of the analysis team conducted a careful review of the transcript. This review served as a check on the quality of data collected from each youth in the sample, including indications of interviewer bias and adequate exploration of key issues. Impressions and problems were communicated to the interviewer and, when necessary, the project director also provided additional training or guidance to the interviewer.

Also during this initial review, members of the analysis team began coding data for each case from the interview transcript and Respondent Profile Form. The preliminary coding scheme was derived from the major categories and concepts implied in the study questions—e.g., country of origin, images of the military and propensity for service. In addition, each analyst recorded her ideas and impressions in the form of analytic notes. These notes commented on any patterns observed in the data (within and across respondents), as well as thoughts on emerging themes, relationships or policy implications.

### ***Development of More Refined Constructs and Coding Categories***

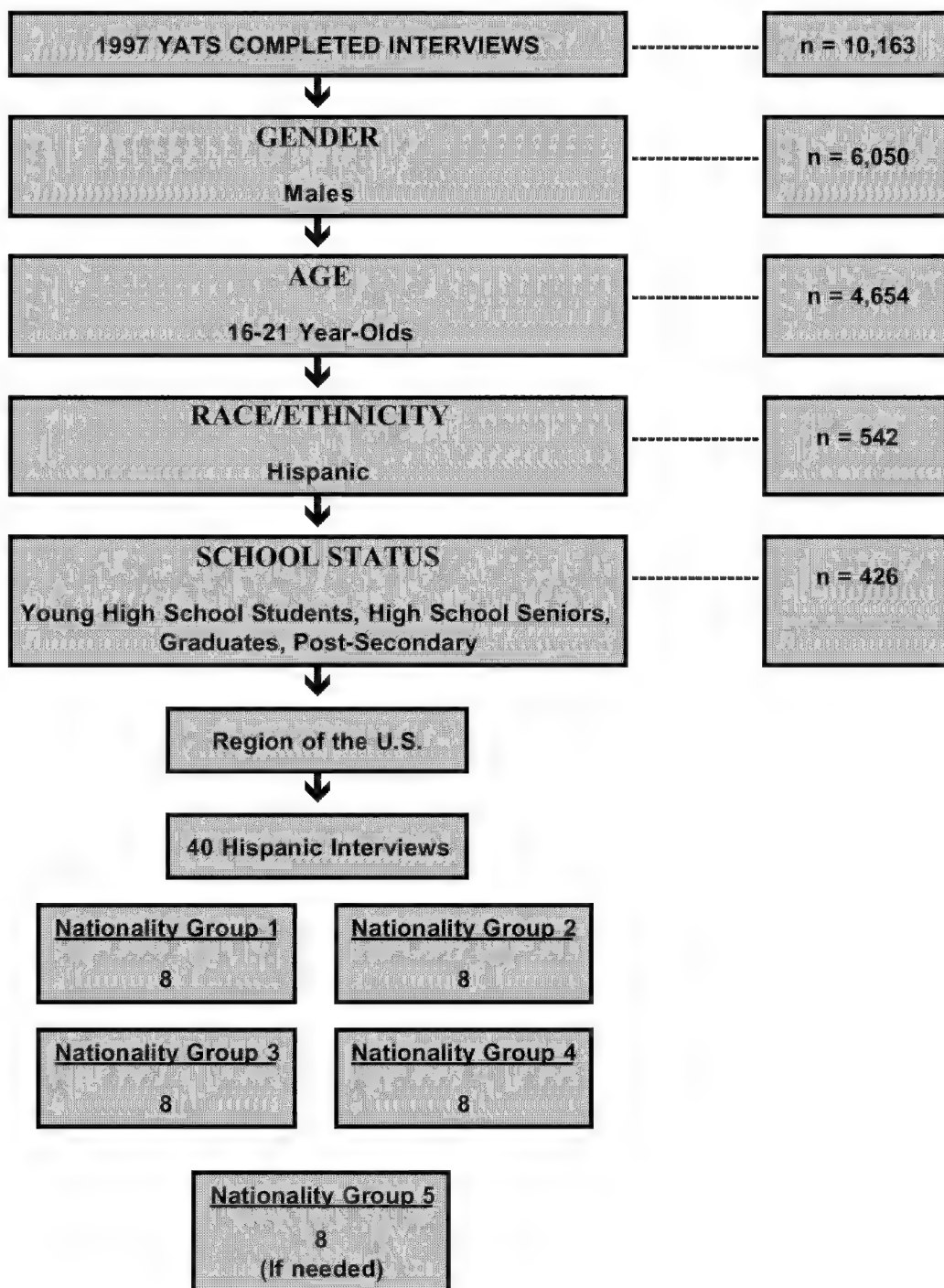
Throughout the data collection phase of the study, the analysis team met regularly to review coded interviews and share thoughts contained in analytic notes. Important outcomes of the analysts' preparatory work and involvement in these discussions were shared understandings of key concepts across analysts and more refined constructs and coding categories over time.

### ***Synthesis of Data***

Next, members of the analysis team synthesized data associated with the key issues addressed in the study to identify patterns or relationships in the data, as well as exceptional cases. In addition, they garnered evidence that supported or challenged hypotheses. To do this, analysts pulled all relevant text from their coding sheets. For example, they pulled information about barriers to enlistment held by youth in each of

the propensity groups. These data were then reviewed and finer-grained analyses of their content were undertaken. The results of these analyses were summarized in ways that highlighted similarities and differences within and across groups. Subsequent queries and analyses, then, explored additional aspects of the data to determine whether and how perceptions differed along other dimensions, such as socioeconomic status and decision-making style. When patterns in the data emerged, analysts returned to the transcripts to gain fuller contextual understanding of the findings.

**Exhibit A**  
**1998 YATS In-Depth Interviews Sample Selection Plan**





**APPENDIX B**

**RESPONDENT PROFILE FORM**

## Respondent Profile Form

### GENERAL INFORMATION

<b>CASE ID</b>	«CASEID»		<b>Plans After HS or in the next few years</b>	«Q438A» «Q438C»	«Q438B»
<b>Subject</b>	«FNAME»		<b>If plans include working, what kind of job?</b>	«Q419B»	
<b>Phone Number</b>			<b>If plans include school, what kind of school?</b>	«Q411»	
<b>Propensity</b>	«PROPGRP»		<b>Highest grade or year of school R would like to complete</b>	«Q415»	
<b>Region</b>	«REGION»		<b>Age</b>	«CALCAGE»	
<b>State</b>	«STATE»		<b>Employment Status</b>	«VEMPSTAT»	
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Likely Nationality</b>	«NAT1»		<b>School Status</b>	«SCHOOLST»	
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Likely Nationality</b>	«NAT2»		<b>Father's Education</b>	«Q713A»	
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Likely Nationality</b>	«NAT3»		<b>Mother's Education</b>	«Q713B»	

### PROPENSITY

<b>How likely is it that R will be serving in the military in the next few years?</b>		«Q503»	
<b>How likely is it that R will be serving in the ...</b>		«Q525»	
<b>Army</b>	«Q510»	<b>Marine Corps</b>	«Q512»
<b>Navy</b>	«Q513»	<b>Air Force</b>	«Q511»
<b>Before YATS interview, had R ever considered joining the military?</b>		«Q525»	
<b>Main reasons R would consider joining</b>		«Q526A1»	«Q526A2» «Q526A3»
<b>Main reasons R would not consider joining</b>		«Q530A1»	«Q530A2» «Q530A3»
<b>Has R's interest increased or decreased?</b>		«Q532»	
<b>Reasons it increased</b>		«Q534A1»	«Q534A2» «Q534A3»
<b>Reasons it decreased</b>		«Q536A1»	«Q536A2» «Q536A3»

INFLUENCES			
Did R ever talk to a military recruiter?			«RECRUIT»
Which Service's recruiters?	«Q629A1» «Q629A2»		
In past year, has R talked to anyone other than a recruiter about serving in the military?			«Q644E»
With whom did the R discuss this? Was it his...?	Has he/she ever been in the military?	How would he/she feel about R serving?	
Father	«V644GDAD»	«Q644LDAD»	«Q644NDAD»
Mother	«V644GMOM»	«Q644LMOM»	«Q644NMOM»
Brother	«V644GSIB»	«Q644LSIB»	«Q644NSIB»
Sister	«V644GSIS»	«Q644LSIS»	«Q644NSIS»
Friend-same generation	«V644GSAM»	«Q644LSAM»	«Q644NSAM»

«CASEID»

## **APPENDIX C**

### **YATS IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE**

## **YATS IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **HISPANIC MALES**

Hello. My name is (FIRST NAME) and I'm calling from Westat on behalf of the Department of Defense. A while back, you responded to a survey that asked about your plans for the future, as well as your views of the military. To get a better understanding of how young people think about their futures, we are calling some of you back to explore these issues in more detail.

This is a very different type of interview. Instead of asking questions that have a set number of answers for you to choose from, you will have the opportunity to express your thoughts and opinions in your own words. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential.

The interview will take 40 to 45 minutes to complete and will be tape recorded so that I don't have to take such detailed notes while we're talking. At the end of the interview I will turn the recorder off and get your full name and address so that we can send you a check for \$15.

Let's begin.

## A. POST-SECONDARY PLANS

Right now you are at a point in your life when you may be making decisions that will affect your future. This first set of questions will explore your thoughts about what you might be doing in the next several years and why you [are making/have made] certain choices.

It is very important for you to understand that there are no right or wrong answers. People are very different in the ways that they think about or plan for their futures. We want to understand your thoughts, plans and opinions.

1. The information we have about you from the survey is pretty basic. I know that at the time of the survey you were [INSERT INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOL AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS FROM YATS SURVEY]. Could you tell me about yourself—like:

### IF IN SCHOOL:

- ❖ [Tell me about] the classes you're taking in school.
- ❖ Are you involved in any extra-curricular activities—like sports, drama, chess club, scouts, Jr. ROTC...? [EXPLORE USING NON-LEADING PROBES.]

### IF WORKING/LOOKING FOR WORK:

- ❖ [Now] about your job—[tell me]--what you do? How long have you worked there? Full-time/part-time?

**OTHER:**

- ❖ What do you do when you're not [**working and/or going to school**]?

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

2. Some young people your age feel that they are ready or prepared to make decisions about future plans. Others feel that they are not quite ready. Do you feel that you are ready to make good decisions about what you will be doing in the next few years?

**IF NO, KIND OF, UNSURE:**

- ❖ Why do you feel that way?
- ❖ What more do you think you need to know or do to be able to make good decisions about the future?

**IF YES:**

- ❖ Why do you feel that way?

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

3. When we talked with you before, you said in the next few years you might be:  
[LIST ACTIVITIES MENTIONED ON YATS]:

Activity 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
Activity 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
Activity 3: \_\_\_\_\_

- ❖ Do you still plan to be doing these things?

**IF YES:**

- ❖ Tell me about these activities—how you became interested in pursuing them, who you talked to about it, steps you've taken...

- ❖ How, if at all, has your current family situation or any plans you may have for starting a family in the future, influenced your plans?

**IF NO:**

- ❖ What made you change your mind about this since the survey?
- ❖ What do you now think you might be doing in the next few years?

Activity 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity 3: \_\_\_\_\_

- ❖ FOR EACH ACTIVITY MENTIONED: Tell me about [NAME OF ACTIVITY]—how you became interested in pursuing this, who you talked to about it, concrete steps taken, and any obstacles you have encountered.
- ❖ How, if at all, has your current family situation or any plans you may have for starting a family in the future, influenced your decisions about pursuing these activities?

**B. MILITARY**

The next questions ask your thoughts and opinions about the military.

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

4. When we spoke with you before you said you would [definitely, probably, probably not, definitely not] be serving in the military in the next few years. Would you respond in the same way today?

**IF YES, GO TO QUESTION 6.**

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

5. How have your views about joining the military changed? Why?

- ❖ Have you come to these views mostly on your own, or have other people influenced you? If so, who?



❖ FOR EACH PERSON MENTIONED: What did (he/she/they) do or say that influenced you?

❖ IF NOT MENTIONED: Have you had any contact with a military recruiter?

**IF NO:** Did you have the opportunity to talk with a recruiter, but decided not to? Why?

**IF YES:** Describe any contacts you had with a recruiter—e.g., who initiated the contact, what you talked about, your impressions of the experience and how it affected your views of the military for yourself.

❖ What, if anything, might make you change your mind [about joining the military]?

[In addition to the people you mentioned] was there anything else that influenced your views—like some circumstance or something you saw on television or read in a magazine or newspaper, something you found on the internet or anywhere else? **PROBE ON SOURCE AND CONTENT OF THE MESSAGE.**

**IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 7.**

**IF YES, PROBE ON SOURCE AND CONTENT OF THE MESSAGE. THEN GO TO QUESTION 7.**

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

6. **IS RESPONDENT A JOINER, NON-JOINER, FENCE-SITTER OR SHIFTER?**

**IF JOINER OR NON-JOINER**

❖ You seem quite definite about [joining/not joining] the military. What makes you so definite?

❖ Have you come to these views mostly on your own, or have other people influenced you? If so, who?

- ❖ FOR EACH PERSON MENTIONED: What did (he/she/they) do or say that influenced you?
- ❖ [In addition to the people you mentioned] was there any other source of information that influenced your views—like something you saw on television or read in a magazine or newspaper, something you found on the internet or anywhere else?
- ❖ IF NOT MENTIONED: Have you had any contact with a military recruiter?

**IF NO:** Did you have the opportunity to talk with a recruiter, but decided not to? Why?

**IF YES:** Describe any contacts you had with a recruiter—e.g., who initiated the contact, what you talked about, your impressions of the experience and how it affected your views of the military for yourself.

- ❖ What, if anything, might make you change your mind?

## **GO TO QUESTION 7.**

### **IF FENCE SITTER**

- ❖ Answering that you would [probably/probably not] enter the military seems to indicate that you are leaning toward [joining/not joining], but have not yet completely decided. Is this an accurate description of your answer?
- ❖ What is your main reason for saying that you would [probably/probably not] enter the military?
- ❖ Any other reasons?
- ❖ In what ways have others influenced you or your views about entering the military? Who are these people?
- ❖ FOR EACH PERSON MENTIONED: What did (he/she/they) do or say that influenced you?

❖ [In addition to the people you mentioned] was there any other source of information that influenced your views—like something you saw on television or read in a magazine or newspaper, something you found on the internet or anywhere else?

❖ IF NOT MENTIONED: Have you had any contact with a military recruiter?

**IF NO:** Did you have the opportunity to talk with a recruiter, but decided not to? Why?

**IF YES:** Describe any contacts you had with a recruiter—e.g., who initiated the contact, what you talked about, your impressions of the experience and how it affected your views of the military for yourself.

❖ What circumstances or factors might swing your decision one way or the other?

## **GO TO QUESTION 7.**

### **IF SHIFTER**

❖ You said on the survey you would definitely not be joining the military, but at some point in the past had seriously considered it. When was it that you seriously considered joining the military?

❖ What made you decide that you would not join?

❖ In what ways have others influenced you or your views about entering the military? Who are these people?

❖ FOR EACH PERSON MENTIONED: What did (he/she/they) do or say that influenced you?

❖ [In addition to the people you mentioned] was there any other source of information that influenced your views—like something you saw on television or read in a magazine or newspaper, something you found on the internet or anywhere else?

❖ IF NOT MENTIONED: Have you had any contact with a military recruiter?

**IF NO:** Did you have the opportunity to talk with a recruiter, but decided not to? Why?

**IF YES:** Describe any contacts you had with a recruiter—e.g., who initiated the contact, what you talked about, your impressions of the experience and how it affected your views of the military for yourself.

❖ Can you foresee anything happening that might change your mind? Tell me about it.

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

7. Since the survey, how much thought have you put into whether or not you might enlist in the military?

❖ Compared to before the survey, would you say you've thought about it more or less since the survey.

❖ What kinds of things, if any, have you considered? Sought out more information on?

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

## **C. IMAGES OF THE FUTURE—MILITARY AND NON-MILITARY CAREERS AND LIFESTYLES**

The next questions explore how you view military and non-military lifestyles and careers.

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

8. What are the very first things that come to mind when you think about what it would be like for you if you **[INSERT ASPIRATIONS EXPRESSED IN RESPONSE TO Q. 3 HERE]**.

- ❖ Where would you say you get most of your ideas about what life in [college or particular occupation] would be like?

**FOR EACH SOURCE OF IDEAS:**

- ❖ How has [**INSERT NAME OF SOURCE**] influenced you?
- ❖ Would you say you have an accurate picture of what your life would be like?

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

9. What are the very first things that come to mind when you think about what it would be like to be in the military?

- ❖ Would military life change over time? Why/Why not?
- ❖ Where would you say you get most of your ideas about what life in the military would be like?
- ❖ **FOR EACH SOURCE OF IDEAS:** How has [name of source] influenced you?
- ❖ Would you say you have an accurate picture of what your life would be like if you joined the military?

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

10. In your opinion, what are the two most important ways that being in the military would be different from holding a civilian job or going to school?

- ❖ What do you see as the main advantages of a military lifestyle?
- ❖ What do you see as the main disadvantages?

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

11. Do you think being in the military would change you as a person?

- ❖ How do you think it might change you?

- ❖ How would these changes compare to how you would change if you [continued in school/worked in a civilian job]?

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

12. IF NOT ALREADY ADDRESSED SUFFICIENTLY: Do you know anyone who is currently serving in any branch of the military?

**IF NO, GO TO Q.13**

**IF YES:**

- ❖ Who are these persons? What is their relationship to you (e.g., brother, sister, uncle, neighbor)?
- ❖ What branch of the military does each serve in (if known)?
- ❖ In what ways has each of these people influenced respondent's views about the military—directly (e.g., through interactions or conversations) or indirectly (e.g., through observation or hearsay)—if at all?

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

13. IF NOT ALREADY ADDRESSED SUFFICIENTLY: Do you know anyone who used to serve in any branch of the military?

**IF NO, GO TO SECTION D.**

**IF YES:**

- ❖ Who are these persons? What is their relationship to you (e.g., brother, sister, uncle, neighbor)?
- ❖ What branch of the military does each serve in (if known)?
- ❖ In what ways has each of these people influenced respondent's views about the military—directly (e.g., through interactions or conversations) or indirectly (e.g., through observation or hearsay)—if at all?

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

14. Over the past few years, the U.S. military has become more involved in keeping the peace in foreign countries, such as Bosnia and Somalia. How, if at all, has this affected your views about joining the military?

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

**D. ENLISTMENT MORE ATTRACTIVE**

15. We're getting close to the end here. In your opinion what, if anything, could the military do to make enlisting more attractive to young men like yourself?

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

**ID:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E. FAMILY BACKGROUND**

These last few questions are about your family's ancestry, cultural background, and national heritage. We're interested in knowing about the family background of the young people we're talking to...

16. Are either of your parents of Hispanic, Latino or of Spanish origin?

\_\_\_ YES

\_\_\_ NO

17. What is your mother's ethnic background?

\_\_\_ MEXICAN

\_\_\_ PUERTO RICAN

\_\_\_ CUBAN

\_\_\_ CENTRAL OR SOUTH AMERICAN (SPECIFY COUNTRY:  
\_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_ OTHER HISPANIC (SPECIFY: \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_ OTHER NON-HISPANIC (SPECIFY: \_\_\_\_\_)

18. What is your father's ethnic background?

\_\_\_ MEXICAN

\_\_\_ PUERTO RICAN

\_\_\_ CUBAN

\_\_\_ CENTRAL OR SOUTH AMERICAN (SPECIFY COUNTRY: \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_ OTHER HISPANIC (SPECIFY: \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_ OTHER NON-HISPANIC (SPECIFY: \_\_\_\_\_)



19. Can you tell me about the circumstances that led to your family's settling in the United States?

IF NOT MENTIONED, ASK ABOUT:

A. Number of generations in U.S. (or who first came—e.g., grandfather, fathers' father, mother's brother...)

B. Reasons family came to the U.S. (e.g., annexation, political, economic).

20. Have your family's opinions or experiences with the military in [countr(ies) of origin] affected your views about military service here in the United States? Explain.

21. In what country were you born?

\_\_\_ U.S. [SKIP TO Q.23]

\_\_\_ MEXICO

\_\_\_ PUERTO RICO

\_\_\_ CUBA

\_\_\_ CENTRAL OR SOUTH AMERICA (SPECIFY COUNTRY: \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_ OTHER HISPANIC (SPECIFY COUNTRY: \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_ OTHER NON-HISPANIC (SPECIFY COUNTRY: \_\_\_\_\_)

22. How old were you when you came to the U.S. to live? \_\_\_\_\_

23. Are you fluent in the Spanish language?

\_\_\_ NO [END]

\_\_\_ YES

24. What language do you speak most often at home?

25. What language do you speak most often when you are away from home?

26. Which language do you prefer to speak?

\_\_\_ ENGLISH

\_\_\_ SPANISH

\_\_\_ OTHER (SPECIFY: \_\_\_\_\_)

⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘⌘

**F. END**

That completes the interview. Thanks so much for taking the time to talk with me. I'm turning the recorder off now so that I can get your last name and the address where you'd like to have the check sent.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDANCE**

## INTERVIEW GUIDANCE

### NOTATION

The questionnaire and guide use a standardized notation whereby:

- **Bold** is used to identify the sections of the interview.
- CAPITALIZATION is used to identify instructions to the interviewer.
- Redlining is used to identify places where the interviewer needs to fill in information about the respondent before beginning the interview.

### A NOTE ABOUT THE INTERVIEW STYLE

Unlike structured interviews that seek responses that are short and easily coded, the purpose of these interviews is to get a narrative response of the respondents' thoughts, opinions, perspectives and experiences.

Since we want to know what the respondent thinks, we need to be careful that we do not suggest answers or lead him down a particular path. The questions have been tested with two other populations and revised based on these experiences and are broad enough to allow for a wide range of "correct" responses.

A very important job of interviewers is to listen to what the young men are saying, urge them to tell you more about what their views and how and why they have come to them. As the interview progresses, this information can be incorporated into the interview in ways that let the respondent know you are interested in, and attentive to, what he is saying, and not merely running through a series of rote questions.

Silence can be golden. The interview covers a broad range of topics that the respondent may or may not have thought much about. Acknowledge this periodically and give the respondent time to think about it and formulate a response. At times it may help to ask whether it would be helpful for you to repeat the question.

Examples of non-leading probes that are useful in these interviews include:

Can you tell me what you mean by...?

Can you tell me why you feel that way...?

What has led you to...?

How did you come to that view...?

Tell me more about that...

## BEFORE EACH INTERVIEW

Before each interview:

Review the information on the Respondent's Profile Form.

Insert information about the respondent from the Profile Sheet into the appropriate places in the protocol. To facilitate preparation for the interview, these places are redlined in the protocol.

### Introductory Statement

The information in this statement is important. Interviewers can either read it verbatim or rephrase in a way that feels more natural, but still includes all the information.

#### A. Post-Secondary Plans

##### Question 1

A major purpose of this set of questions is to get updated information about how respondents spend their time—e.g., if they're enrolled in school, what they're studying; if they're employed, the type of work they do, how long they've been working and what they like and dislike about their jobs; if they're not employed, whether they're looking for work and, if so, the type of job they're looking for and their strategies for finding it; and what they do with their leisure time—when they're not in school or working.

These questions are intentionally non-threatening. Another major purpose of this set of questions is to put the respondent at ease and set the stage for descriptive responses (i.e., not just yes/no).

##### Question 2

The purpose of this question is to learn whether the respondent thinks he is ready or prepared to make good decisions about his future and, importantly, why he thinks his is ready or not ready.

The question is intended to be neutral. It has been phrased to give the respondent permission to acknowledge that he does not feel ready to make good decisions about his future. Our main interest is to understand why he feels this way and what he needs (or what needs to happen) before he feels ready.

##### Question 3

This set of questions is based on information about the respondent's anticipated plans/activities listed on the Respondent Profile Form. If only one or two activities are listed, ask about each. If more than three are listed, ask about the first three.

Occasionally, there may be no information about anticipated plans/activities listed on the Respondent Profile Form. Instead of saying "you said you had no plans" or "you said you would do whatever came your way," ask something like: "The information I have suggests that you were

uncertain about what you might be doing... Is this an accurate statement? If they say no, ask them to tell you about what they think they might be doing and proceed with the set of questions.” If they say “yes,” ask them if they now have some plans or activities that they would like to pursue.

## **B. Military**

The questions in this section focus on the respondent’s inclinations toward enlisting or not enlisting in the military.

### Question 4

Question 4 incorporates information from the Respondent Profile Form about what he said on the YATS survey concerning the likelihood of his serving in the military in the next few years.

If the respondent says, “YES” he would respond in the same way today, GO TO Question 6.

If the respondent says, “NO” he would not respond in the same way today, proceed on to Question 5.

### Question 5

Only respondents who answer “NO” to Question 4 will respond to this question. The purpose is to get them to explain in their own words how their views about joining the military have changed and why.

The second and third questions ask whether anyone has influenced their thinking about military service, who they are and what they did or said to influence the respondent.

The fourth question asks whether there was anything else that influenced them to change their mind about the military—like something they saw on television or read... Ask them to take their time and think about what might have influenced their views. Explore, but do not lead them to think about particular things.

If they have not mentioned contact with a military recruiter. Ask them. If they say they have not had contact, ask whether they could have talked to a recruiter if they wanted to. If they have talked to a recruiter, ask them to describe for you the nature of the contact, who initiated it, what they talked about, their impressions of the experience, and how it they think it affected their propensity to enlist.

Finally, we’re interested in knowing what, if anything, might influence them to change their mind about serving in the military [again].

When you have exhausted these topics with the respondent, GO TO Q. 7.

### Question 6

Prior to the interviewer, determine the respondent's propensity group from the Respondent Profile Sheet. This will determine which set of questions you will ask.

The questions for each propensity group are very similar to those described in Question 5, though they have been modified slightly to fit the generalized circumstances of joiners and non-joiners, shifters and fence-sitters.

#### Question 7

All respondents should be asked this set of questions.

### **C. Images of the Future—Military and Non-Military Careers and Lifestyles.**

Questions in this section explore the respondent's images of military and civilian lifestyles and the sources of these images. It's important to note that the respondent's frame of reference for these questions should be himself—i.e., we want each respondent to imagine what his life would be like in his choice of career and the military.

#### Questions 8 and 9

All respondents should be asked Questions 8 and 9.

These two sets of questions are identical. In Question 8 they refer to images of life if they pursued a civilian lifestyle. In Question 9 they refer to images of life if they pursued a military life style.

The order of the questions should be changed to fit what the respondent has told you. If, for example, he has indicated a strong preference for the military, then it makes sense to explore his images of the military lifestyle first.

Some respondents may have a difficult time imagining life in the military or in a civilian career. For many, this sort of imagining about the future may be a completely novel experience. Let the respondent know: "these are tough questions to answer... Maybe you've never even thought about your future in this way... Take your time... think about what life would be..." If he's still having problems, try use what you know about the respondent to open the discussion.

#### Question 10

All respondents should be asked this set of questions.

We're interested in knowing how each respondent thinks his life would be different if he pursued a military vs. civilian lifestyle. This may be another tough question. The respondent may be able to identify many important ways and have a difficult time narrowing them down. This is okay. Let him think out loud. When he's finished ask him to select the two he thinks are most important.

The two follow-up questions ask for their opinions/perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of a military lifestyle. Again, give them time to think and encourage them to do

their thinking out loud. We are very interested in what they have to say—the less censure the better!

### **Question 11**

This set of questions should be asked of all respondents. Again, encourage them to take their time and think out loud. When necessary use non-leading probes, such as: “Can you tell me a little more about...” or “Can you think of any other changes...?”

### **Questions 12 and 13**

These questions explore whether the respondent knows anyone who is currently serving in the military (Question 12) or used to serve in the military (Question 13) and whether and how these people may have influenced their views—directly (e.g., through interactions or conversations) or indirectly (e.g., through observation or hearsay).

### **Question 14**

This question is intended to explore the respondent’s views on the military’s involvement in peacekeeping missions overseas and how, if at all, it affects his views about joining the military.

Again, give the respondent permission to think out loud. Use non-leading probes to encourage him to extend his response—e.g., “Can you tell me a little more about that...?”

## **D. Enlistment More Attractive**

### **Question 15**

This is an important marketing question. The purpose of this question is to get the respondents’ ideas and opinions about what the military could do to make itself more attractive to young Hispanic males. Follow-up their response with non-leading probes such as: “Anything else...?” “Can you tell me more about what you mean by...”

This is a key question that all respondents should be asked.

## **E. Family Background**

The questions in this section are a key element in our analysis plan. The main purpose of this study is to understand the orientation of young Hispanic men with different heritages and experiences in the U.S. to military and other career options. Responses to the questions in this section will provide the overarching framework for our analysis of the interview data.

Record all responses on the pages provided, in addition to the tape recording. We will be using the responses in this section to monitor the characteristics of the sample we are drawing. For this reason, interviewers will be expected to turn them in with the interview tape, respondent address form and summary of the interview within a day of the interview.



Please be aware that these are potentially sensitive questions. If a respondent is reluctant to answer them, remind him that all data are confidential and will not be attached with any information that could identify him. If necessary, offer to turn the tape recorder off. Before doing so, sign-off with a message that you are turning it off. This will help us in coordinating the transcription process. To the extent possible, write verbatim accounts of the respondents' answers.

#### Question 16

This is a gateway question that allows us to sensitively collect information about the ancestry and national origin of both parents. The emphasis is on the word either—i.e., if they respond that their mother is of Hispanic origin, but their father is not (or vice-versa), the interviewer should place a ✓ beside “YES.”

A respondent may answer “NO.” If so, do not express surprise or dismay, and do not challenge his response. Instead, proceed calmly and naturally to Questions 17 and 18.

There are several plausible reasons that may lead a respondent to answer “NO”:

He may have not heard the word “either” in your question and, therefore, answered “NO” because both parents are not of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish heritage;

He may have been erroneously classified as Hispanic due to a coding error.

His family’s ancestry may be Italian or German, but because they were raised in some Central or South American country, for example, they may identify themselves as “cultural Hispanics.”

#### Questions 17 and 18

These two questions ask the respondent to identify his mother’s and father’s ancestry or ethnic origin, respectively. Note that the response categories are in ALL CAPS, indicating that they should not be read to the respondent. If the respondent mentions a country from Central or South America, it is important that you write in the name of the country. He may also mention a country that you have not heard of or refer to an indigenous group (e.g., Mayan or Tierra del Fuegoan). Whether you’re certain or uncertain of the appropriate coding category, write down everything he says & we can determine the correct coding category afterwards. The purpose is not to test or judge your knowledge of geography!!

#### Question 19

Let them take their time here. This question is intended as an open-ended invitation for the respondent to tell us about when and why his family settled in the United States. Listen to how he describes the circumstances that led to his family’s settling here—and keep in mind that some may be from families who were settled here before Columbus and indigenous Spanish land and cultures were incorporated into the United States.

When they appear to be finished, always ask “is there anything more you can tell me about these circumstances...?” or “is there anything more you want to add?” If after doing this they have not

mentioned anything about: (A) when their family first settled here and (B) why their family came to the U.S., ask these as follow-up questions.

#### Question 20

The purpose of this question is to explore the possibility that a respondent's opinions or impressions of the military in the U.S. are affected by opinions or experiences (positive or negative) with military regimes or U.S. military action in their family's country of origin. Although this question may be most relevant to respondents whose families sought refuge in the United States to escape dictatorial or totalitarian military governments, we are fielding it with all respondents.

#### Question 21

This question is self-explanatory. 16 & 17. Note that the response categories are in ALL CAPS, indicating that they should not be read to the respondent.

If the respondent mentions a country from Central or South America, it is important that you write in the name of the country. He may also mention a country that you have not heard of or refer to an indigenous group (e.g., Mayan or Tierra del Fuegoan). Whether you're certain or uncertain of the appropriate coding category, write down everything he says & we can determine the correct coding category afterwards. Again, the purpose is not to test or judge your knowledge of geography!!

If the respondent was born in the U.S., skip to Question 24.

#### Question 22

This question is self-explanatory. Be sure to record the respondent's age. If he responds with the number of years he has been in the U.S.—e.g., “I came here two years ago...”—follow-up with a question such as—“So that would make you how old when you came to the U.S. to live?”.

#### Question 23

There are, of course, some very strict definitions of fluency or competency in a language. We do not expect that too many will be uncertain over their fluency in Spanish. However, if they want to know what we mean by “fluency,” say something like: We want to know whether you consider yourself fluent...” If they are uncertain, write that in and proceed to the next question.

If they answer “NO,” go to the END of the protocol.

#### Questions 24 and 25

If they say Spanish and English, ask them to tell you about the circumstances in which they speak Spanish and those in which they speak English. For example, they may only speak English except when they are angry. Or perhaps their father is bilingual, but their mother is not.

**Question 26**

Only bilingual respondents will make it to this question. Ask them which language—Spanish or English—they prefer to speak. Let them explain the reasons for their decision (or why they find it difficult to state a preference).

**F. END**

Thank respondent for his participation.

Turn off recorder & get respondent's name and complete mailing address.

**APPENDIX E**

**CALL RECORD**

## «ZONE»

«PHONE1»

«PHONE2»

## New Phone

\*\*\* CIRCLE PHONE NUMBER AT WHICH INTERVIEW WAS SCHEDULED

[illegible]

## **APPENDIX F**

### **INTERVIEW SUMMARY GUIDE**

## INTERVIEW SUMMARY GUIDE

### SUMMARY FORM

#### YATS IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH YOUNG HISPANIC MEN

*Please complete this summary form as soon as possible after the interview.*

**Name of Respondent**

**CASE ID**

**Date of Interview**

- S1.** Briefly summarize your overall impressions of how the interview went.
- S2.** Based on the interview, would you still characterize the respondent as a (Joiner, Non-Joiner, Shifter, Fence-Sitter)? What were the central themes expressed with respect to joining the military/images of military life?
- S3.** In a nutshell, how would you describe the respondent's overall approach to making decisions about his/her future plans?
- S4.** Please comment very briefly on anything else you found particularly interesting or noteworthy about the respondent or the interview that might be of help in interpreting the responses.

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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